Through African Canadian Eyes:

Landscape Painting by Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century African Canadians

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on landscape as artistic genre and site in relation to African Canadian cultural belonging and agency as fine artists and Canadian citizens at the turn of the twentieth century. Attending to aspects of racialization in Canadian art in which landscape is considered both as geopolitical territory and as the hallmark subject matter, it specifically examines how African Canadian artists navigated racialized spaces – landscapes of psychic and lived Black violence – when African Canadians were systematically positioned outside the imagined and physical constructs of the nation. The period covered is from 1760 until 1910 when a shift occurred artistically and ideologically in Black culture, underscored by a desire for African Unity and greater access and participation in North American economic, cultural, and political society.

Historical records have long relegated African Canadians to an underclass, representing them as non-actors or non-participants in Canadian art history. This thesis compares and contrasts the lives and work of two African Canadian landscape artists, George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906; Shelburne, NS) and Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (ca.1880-1954; Africville, Halifax, NS) to examine and document their artistic contributions to early Canadian art history. Section One provides a historiography of Canadian landscape as art and territory between 1760 and 1900, focusing on its psychic and physical aspects. It situates the lived experiences of African Canadians within the geographical territory known as Canada, exploring how land (and freedom) was wielded as a weapon of disenfranchisement against African Canadians. Section Two presents the first of the two case studies: the life and work of George Henry McCarthy. This section examines how, if at all, McCarthy's African and White mixed race heritage influenced his art making and lived experience in Canada. Section Three presents the second case study on the life and work of Edith Hester McDonald (later Brown) to provide a historical point-of-departure to examine Black women's access to professionalization in the visual arts in early Canada. I propose McCarthy as the earliest known African Canadian male artist, and McDonald as the first known African Canadian woman artist in art history.

The thesis concludes by summarizing the correlation between place, belonging and the representation of African Canadian as artists, in the teaching and display of Canadian art.

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To my mother, Pearl, my husband Michael, my brother Lawrence, my sister Elona and Eleanor Kogan words can never capture how pivotal your encouragement, generosity, love and patience were to my university studies and growth. I love you!

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INTRODUCTION

> That there exists a great misapprehension in the minds of many well-meaning persons, white as well as black, in regard to the Negro race, as fundamentally possessing an art talent…Years of brutal slavery, race prejudice, race proscription, race discrimination and the like have stigmatized and almost crushed out the art talent and knowledge of the cultural background of the Negro.[1]

This thesis is concerned with the spatial aspects of racialization in Canadian art in which landscape is considered both as geopolitical territory and as the hallmark subject matter. Specifically, it examines how African Canadian artists navigated racialized spaces – landscapes of psychic and lived Black violence – at the turn of the twentieth century when African Canadians were systematically positioned outside the imagined and physical constructs of the nation. Descendants of the rich, vibrant and influential artistic legacies of the African continent spanning millennia, African Canadians have been a fact of Canada's lived landscape from as early as the seventeenth century. Yet they are pervasively underrepresented or not represented at all as artists in the teaching and exhibition of early Canadian art. This absence perpetuates the stereotype that African Canadians were not intellectual or creative people and their cultural production, perspectives and experiences as practically non-existent or worthy enough to be historically documented.

By focusing on contributions by African Canadian artists in early Canadian art history, this thesis reveals ways in which the Eurocentric colonial system not only hoarded culture but also leveraged associations between so-called Western high art and civilization. Eurocentric hegemonic discourses perpetuated the idea that Africans lacked the ability to create *fine art*, employing this formulation as a rationale for the enslavement, oppression and brutalization of African people. As curator and cultural critic Andrea Fatona aptly observes, "[a]rt came to stand as one of the higher intelligences in the raciology of the colonial globe, and it became a means to rob black peoples of their humanity.[2] Challenging these misconceptions, this thesis focuses on examining and contrasting the lives and works of African Canadian landscape artists George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906; born in Shelburne, NS), and Edith Hester McDonald (later Brown, 1884-1954; born in Africville, Halifax, NS), to assert that economic standing was a critical factor in their gendered and racially-specific experiences as African Canadian artists in Nova Scotia, and to present a counter-narrative to

[1] Charles C. Seifert, *The Negro's or Ethiopian's Contribution to Art* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1936), 12.
[2] Andrea Fatona, *Reading the Image: Poetics of the Black Diaspora* (Chatham, ON: Thames Art Gallery, 2006), 15.
[2] Andrea Fatona, *Reading the Image: Poetics of the Black Diaspora* (Chatham, ON: Thames Art Gallery, 2006), 15.

Canada's history of portraying Blacks as non-artists and non-participants in Canadian art of this time.

Generations-long associations in Eurocentric hegemonic discourses of the colour "black" as equating the negative, in conjunction with the ethnically-homogenizing application of the word "black" (or "negro" in Spanish and Portuguese since as early as the fifteenth century) in reference to persons of dark skin pigmentation, fostered a pervasive and polarizing stratification of different ethnic groups on the basis of skin pigmentation.[3] Through this reductive framework, African peoples were constructed as being at the lowest rung of the racial hierarchy and as possessions rather than humans. Over four hundred years, the global enterprise of trans-Atlantic slavery (ca. 1650-1888) violently uprooted millions of Africans in a massive project of human displacement and cultural genocide to serve the capitalistic ambitions of European colonizers. According to historian Bridglal Pachai approximately from 1450 to 1850, "a minimum of about 19 million and a maximum of about 25 million persons were forcibly removed from Africa and settled in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, North America, South America and the Caribbean."[4] Since then, Black bodies and blackness have remained sites of contestation in the psychic, lived and cultural landscapes of these regions.[5]

The legacy of trans-Atlantic slavery and its practices of dispossession, such as the Christianization of a slave's given name usually adopting that of their owner, has contributed to the sensitivity of many members of Black Canadian communities regarding preferred forms of cultural identification. These forms include, but are not limited to, Black Canadian, Black, African Canadian,

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[3] Notably distressing are examples of colourism within ethnic groups. Focusing on the African perspective, an example of intra-ethnic group colourism is evidenced in the organization of slaves on a plantation, where commonly, light-skinned African slaves, typically the product of sexual relations between a female African slave and a White master, were designated as house slaves. In contrast to their dark-skinned counterparts that performed hard labour usually in the fields, light-skinned slaves received preferential treatment. See: Roland E. Hall, ed., *Racism in the 21st Century: An Empirical Analysis of Skin Colour* (New York, NY: Springer Science and Business Media LLC., 2008); Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Canadian Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Margaret Hunter, "The Persistent Problem of Colourism: Skin Tone, Status and Inequality," *Sociology Compass* 1 no. 1 (2007): 237–254.

[4] Bridglal Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing, 2007), 21.

[5] This statement draws from reports of anti-Black racism by Whites and non-Whites in Brazil, the Caribbean, Jerusalem, and North Africa. Unifying these distinct societies is a perpetual disenfranchisement of persons of African heritage. See: Ajamu Baraka, "Anti-Black Racism Exposed in Israel and the US," Common Dreams.com, accessed July10, 2015, http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/05/07/anti-black-racism-exposed-israel-and-us; Rebecca Tinsley, "The Great Taboo: Arab Racism," Huffington Post.com, accessed July 10, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-tinsley/arab-racism_b_951422.html; Nick Chiles, Blacks in North Africa and Middle East Often Face Virulent Racism from Arabs," Atlanta Black Star.com, accessed July 10, 2015, http://atlantablackstar.com/2012/10/17/blacks-in-north-africa-and-middle-east-often-face-virulent-racism-from-arabs/; "Black Brazilians are much worse off than they should be. But what is the best way to remedy that?" The Economist.com, accessed July 10, 2015, http://www.economist.com/node/21543494 .

African-Caribbean, or [country of origin]-Canadian. Throughout this thesis, I use "African Canadian" and "Black Canadian" interchangeably, in the unifying sense of Pan-Africanism, with respect to all Canadians of African heritage. Further, my use of "African Canadian" is intended to counter the suggestion of placelessness and ethnic homogeneity connoted by "Black/black." It is important, however, to highlight that in the province of Nova Scotia, as the location of Canada's first Black communities, the terms "African Canadian" and "African Nova Scotian" carries special emphasis because as many Nova Scotians of African heritage can directly trace their lineage to Africa. With regard to my usage of the term "White supremacy," I subscribe to the definition provided by Deborah Gabriel in *Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora* (2011): "White supremacy is the process of domination which includes structures, systems, decisions and policies imposed on people of colour by white hegemonies."[6]

Another term that requires some qualification in this thesis is "landscape." Located simultaneously in the imagined and the lived, 'landscape' is a complex and contentious term due to its intensely subjective and politicized nature. As a genre, Llandscape painting matured into a respectable artistic genre alongside the growing dominance Eurocentric colonialism. This was a period of acute, legislatively sanctioned Black disenfranchisement and oppression that notably confined people of African heritage to a purgatory of contradiction for being both a necessity to the New World economy, while simultaneously regarded as non-stakeholders and non-persons. With this in mind, it is intriguing how nineteenth and early twentieth century Eurocentric attitudes towards landscape as site and art elicited sentiments of utopia and freedom, alongside racist and classist understandings of *who* could belong-and-participate freely within a given landscape. Illustrating this point, prominent Montreal businessman and art critic, E.B. Greenshields (1850-1917) included the following quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) at the opening of his 1904 book *The Subjective View of Landscape Painting*: "although fields and farms are owned by different men, the landscape belongs to no one, but is the common property of all who can enjoy it."[7]

Landscape as site continues to be a core element of the nation's identity. As Ramsay Cook observes in his article "Landscape Painting and National Sentiment in Canada" (1974), "the land has been especially important [in Canada] because it sometimes has seemed to be the only common

[6] Deborah Gabriel, *Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora* (London, UK: Imani Media Ltd., 2011), 5.

[7] E.B. Greenshields, *The Subjective View of Landscape Painting - with Special Reference to J. H, Weissenbruch, and Illustrations From his Works in Canada* (Montreal, QC: s.n., 1904), 1.

element in Canadian life."[8] Indeed, in view of Canada's legacy of linguistic and religious contentions, not to mention its founding on unceded Indigenous territories, the land – "the true North and *free* [emphasis mine]"[9] – stands as a key source of distinction and identification against the perceived imposing political and cultural might of the United States of America, a perception that persists as a manner in which Canadians measure their social, cultural and moral distinctiveness and identity.[10] If contrasts are to be made or considered, arguably Canadian art has much to learn in regards to a more inclusive representation of African Canadian art and artists in its national art history.[11] The past forty years has fortunately witnessed a positive shift in the discipline of art history towards greater inclusion and representation of Indigenous and women artists, especially in early Canadian art. Facilitating this development has been the "new art history" model which "emphasizes the relevance of the social context of artistic production and representation as inseparable from issues of artistic identity, and the material and aesthetic properties of an art object."[12] Towards the decolonization of Canadian art, this approach merits more attention and application when considering African Canadian art production from fine art to craft and Black Canadian positionality in relation to colonial Canada and is one that is adopted by this thesis.

Where the New Art History methodology that facilitated the sweeping recovery, interest in and affirmation of the artistic, intellectual and social prowess of White female artists and Indigenous artists, early African Canadian artists, women in particular, have yet to benefit from its more open framework of exploration due to a tradition of systemic anti-Black prejudice within Canada's educational system. Poignantly lamenting this bias in contemporary teaching of early Canadian art history, through her teaching of eighteenth and nineteenth century Canadian art, Charmaine A. Nelson in 2010 states:

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[8] Ramsay Cook, "Landscape Painting and National Sentiment in Canada," *Historical Reflections/ Réflexions Historiques* 1, no.2 (1974): 263.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] I make this statement cognizant of the fact that much of the momentum in the representation and inclusion of African American artists for the period of focus was primarily leveraged by African Americans, and in response to by specific cultural dynamics of American history such as slavery, the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, as well as the African-American Civil Rights movement of 1954-1968. See: Bridget R. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), Alain LeRoy Locke, *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education Inc., 1940), and Samella Lewis, *African American Art and Artists* (Los Angeles: CA: University of California Press, 2003).

[12] Charmaine A. Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 1.

> Throughout countless lectures on western art, it became normal for my white male and female professors to either absent issues of western imperialism, colonialism and racism from culture and art altogether, or to strategically avoid its discussion, even when the artworks they chose to analyse seemed to cry out for such interpretation.[13]

"Through African Canadian Eyes,"[14] is a deliberate action to highlight Black intellectual character and creative authorship, and bring attention to the absence of this perspective in the current teaching and exhibition-making of Canadian art, particularly in the period around the turn of the century. While there is no shortage of Black Canadian texts on the *representation* of people of African heritage in art and popular media (news sources, television, film, advertisements), there is a stark void of discussion and representation of Black Canadian artists active around the turn of the twentieth century.[15] In contrast to the vast literary and visual documentation of African American artists, active during the same period in the United States; weakness in the Canadian context stands as a cultural affront to African Canadians and their lived experiences in this land.

One of the most persistent difficulties of this research, notably at the time of writing, has been in obtaining primary sources on early African Canadian artists. This in and of itself remains among the most significant testaments to the culture of anti-Black racism, particularly the devaluation and denigration of people of African heritage. With this in mind, a significant portion of this research is based on interviews and archival research. The period covered in this work is from 1760 until 1910 when a shift occurs artistically and ideologically in Black culture underscored by a desire for African Unity and greater access and participation in North American economic, cultural, and political society. An example is the launch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 by Jamaican politician and key figure of the Pan-African Movement, Marcus Garvey.

This thesis is divided in three sections. Section One provides a historiography of Canadian landscape as art and territory between 1760 and 1900, attending to its psychic and physical aspects by juxtaposing the lived experiences of African Canadians within the geographical territory known as Canada, and exploring how land (and freedom) was wielded as a weapon of disenfranchisement against African Canadians. It focuses on Nova Scotia. Section Two presents the first of two case

[13] Charmaine A. Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 1.

[14] The title is borrowed and inspired from the 2010 Detroit Institute of Arts exhibition and catalogue of the same name, "Through African Eyes: The European in African Art, 1500 to Present." Through the presentation of one hundred three-dimensional African art works produced between 1500 and 2010, the exhibition engages with how diverse African societies balanced assimilation and contact with Europeans. Detroit Institute of Arts, *Through African Eyes: The European in African Art, 1500 to Present* (Detroit, IL: Detroit Institute of Arts, 2010).

[15] Researching this topic since 2012, it is my contention that focus on African Canadian art and artists is still in its infancy, but has been slowly growing since then, with more sources forthcoming.

studies on the life and work of George Henry McCarthy. This section examines how, if at all, McCarthy's African and White mixed race heritage influenced his art making and lived experience in Canada. Section Three presents the second case study on the life and work of Edith Hester McDonald (later Brown) to provide a historical point-of-departure to examine Black women's access to professionalization in the visual arts in early Canada. Recapping the experiences of African Nova Scotian artists, McCarthy and McDonald, this thesis concludes with a discussion on belonging, cultural citizenship and the ubiquities of racism in Canadian art.

SECTION ONE

Competing Landscapes: Blackness and Art

> The fact is, much of the negative racial mythology and stereotypes developed under colonialism and slavery did not disappear with the abolishment of slavery. The symbolism of color and race, for instance, is still prevalent in both the sacred and the secular domains of Canadian society.[16]
>
> The colonized were enfranchised, as citizens, through their labour in "improving" the landscape. Therefore, it is misguided to position the post-colonial, imaginative realms as being outside the landscape tradition.[17]

As a satellite of French and British imperial empires, African slavery was a reality in French (1608-1759) and English (1760-1867) colonial Canada as much as it was an institution in the United States of America. Acknowledging this fact is critical as trans-Atlantic Slavery crystallized racial hierarchies and formed a critical foundation for the management of Black bodies in Western society. [18] Dispossession continues to be an essential element of Black oppression and disenfranchisement in anti-Black racism in North America; its many forms include dispossession of citizenship, identity, histories, land, legitimacy, intellectual ability, moral character, material ownership and ultimately, wellbeing.[19] The pervasive Eurocentrism found in accounts of early Canadian art history constitutes another area of African Canadian dispossession. As products of both the imagined and the lived, landscape paintings of this period acutely attest to the indissoluble connections between race, place, culture and power. Focusing on Nova Scotia, this section is concerned with the lived experiences of racialization in Canada, "the interiorized and exteriorized

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[1] Joseph Mensah, *The Blacks in Canada: Histories, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2002), 39.

[17] Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, *Landscape, Race and Memory: Material Ecologies of Cultural Citizenship* (Durham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 118.

[18] Slavery was abolished in Britain on March 25, 1807, in Canada on August 1, 1834, and in 1865 in the United States of America. The global institution however officially ended in 1888 when the last country, Brazil, finally abolished indentured servitude.

[19] In terms of well-being, I rely on the definition by Canadian Index of Wellbeing: "The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression, focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use and highest levels of democratic participation and access to, and participation in leisure and culture." Canadian Index of Wellbeing. *How are Canadians Really Doing? The 2012 CIW Report* (Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and University of Waterloo, 2012), 5. See also: M. Nourbese Philip, Frontiers: Selected Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture 1984-1992 (Toronto, ON: Mercury Press, 1992), 293; Statistics Canada Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS): Portrait of a Multicultural Society (Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry, 2002), 29.

landscapes of racism, the geographies of 'absence' and 'presence.'"[20] It begins with a historiography of Black migration to Canada from 1600-1910, and is followed by a historiography of landscape painting in English Canada, attending particularly to the interplay between Canadian landscape, national sentiment and African Canadian representation.

Overview: African Canadian History (1600-1910)

The example of Mathieu Da Costa, a free African seaman, commissioned as an interpreter to facilitate trade between the French and Mi'kmaq on Sieur Du Gua de Monts and Samuel du Champlain's exploratory expeditions to Port Royal, NS suggests people of African descent interacted with Canada's Indigenous peoples and were familiar with the region earlier than 1605.[21] However, slavery was a dominant factor in the establishment of the African Canadian population from the seventeenth century until the turn of the twentieth century. Despite longstanding representations as a welcoming and equitable society, Canada's distinct form of democratic liberal discourse[22] persists in masking its rooted, institutionalized White supremacist ideologies and systems, connecting past with present and thus propagating contemporary acts of anti-Black racism that create or sustain sites of psychic and lived violence in this country.

Black Canadian history however continues to be preserved and enriched through the invaluable contributions of Black authors including: *Canada and its people of African descent*, 1977, *Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada*, 2010, *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia, 1978*, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada*, 1870-1955, 2010, *The Blacks in Canada: Histories, Experiences, Social Condition*s, 2002, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centurie*s, 2007, *Blacks in Deep Snow*, 1979, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*,1997) and *The Blacks in Canada*, 1996. A consistent unifying element of these works is that they contest the politics of Black bodies being "deemed unsuitable" on Canadian soil.[23]

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[20] Linda Peake and Brian Ray, "Racializing the Canadian landscape: whiteness, uneven geographies and social justice," *The Canadian Geographer/ Le Géographe canadien* 45, no. 1 (2001): 180.

[21] A. J. B. Johnston, *Mathieu Da Costa and Early Canada: Possibilities and Probabilities* (Ottawa, ON: Parks Canada, 2012), 1-3; Robin W. Winks. *The Blacks in Canada, A History* 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 1-2; Bridglal Pachai, *Images of our Past: Historic Black Nova Scotia* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing, 2006), 1.

[22] Frances Henry, Mattis, Winston, Tator, Carol, "Introduction" in *Challenging Racism in the Arts: Case Studies of Controversy and Conflict* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 3-6. According to the authors, democratic liberal discourse describes actions and discussions that appear to address issues of identity and nation, but fundamentally sustain the power structure of the dominant group.

[23] Historica Canada,"Deemed Unsuitable": Black Pioneers in Western Canada, accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/deemed-unsuitable-black-pioneers-in-western-canada-feature/

Nova Scotia, the Indigenous lands of the Mi'kmaq, is the location of Canada's oldest African Canadian communities, a presence recorded since the 1600s. Connecting Nova Scotia and the American colonies (fig. 1.1) were the colonizing activities of immigrant Whites from Europe whose settlement brutally displaced Indigenous peoples across America and Canada.

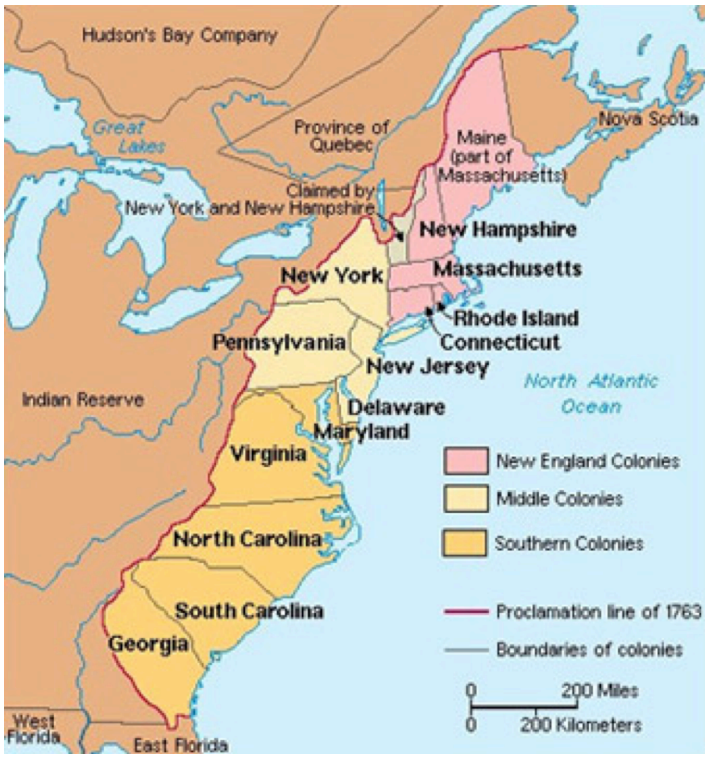

Fig. 1.1. Map showing boundaries of Quebec, Nova Scotia, New England Colonies, the Thirteen original American Colonies, and the Indian Reserve, c.1763
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http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_furtrade/fp_contact_thirteen_colonies.html

Slavery's history in Canada includes Indigenous peoples, and during Canada's French colonial era the term "*panis*" was disdainfully used by French settlers in reference to the Indigenous population, regardless of their specific ethnic identity. According to Marcel Trudel, Indigenous peoples were preferred over Africans by French immigrant colonizers.[24] By 1720, however, a significant transition toward using Africans occurred, leading to the predominant use of Africans as slaves for the remainder of Canada's colonial slavery era.[25]

[24] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks In Canada:: A History,* 2nd edition (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 2-3.
[25] Bridglal Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing, 2007), 38. In 1759, "the Nova Scotia government opened up new lands, confiscated from the exiled Acadians, to settlers from the New England colonies which were later to become part of the United States of America."

Throughout the French and British colonial empires, people of African descent were fundamentally regarded as chattel – objects owned for life and without rights – that were often sold alongside, and treated as, livestock at markets in populous Canadian cities such as Montreal, QC and Halifax, NS.[26] From the beginnings of European colonialist expansion, the terms of belonging and existing on the land would be a distinct, and ongoing struggle for people of African heritage.

The development of African Canadian communities in Nova Scotia (and other Atlantic provinces) is closely connected to British and American battles for geopolitical dominance and national identity between 1775 and 1865 and to pre-Confederation and American legislation on slavery. The Revolutionary War initiated a period of Black Loyalist migration to Nova Scotia from 1776 to 1784. Central to this process was Virginian Governor, Lord Dunmore's Proclamation of November 14, 1775 that called for slaves in the American colonies to align with the British (Loyalists) in exchange for protection, land and freedom. The plan, conceived by Dunmore in 1772, viewed enlisting slaves as a strategic device designed to disadvantage the Americans (Patriots) by disrupting their slave-based economy.[27] In the Virginian Gazette, Patriots responded by publishing, adjacent Dunmore's Proclamation, a stern warning to slaves "weak enough to believe that Lord Dunmore intends to do them a kindness," to consider "what they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans."[28] Eight hundred African men fled to British lines at great risk to their lives (some with spouses, siblings and children) forming the Royal Ethiopian Regiment. Those caught defecting to Dunmore faced death.[29] Ultimately, the successes of the Regiment contributed to the Philipsburg Proclamation (1779), which extended protection, land and freedom to slaves throughout British colonies.[30] By the end of the war, an estimated one hundred thousand African

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[26] Harvey-Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 16.

[27] Noteworthy is Dunmore's initial misguided belief that slaves would quickly join British lines from a desire to get revenge on their oppressors and cause all-out rebellion. Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1972), 131; "Dunmore's Proclamation: A Time to Choose" accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.history.org/Almanack/people/african/aadunpro.cfm.

[28] Black Loyalist, "Lord Dunmore's Proclamation," accessed January 1, 2015, http://www.blackloyalistinfo/event/display/151.

[29] Ibid.; A threatening warning was posted alongside Dunmore's proclamation outlining the penalties to Blacks defecting to Dunmore.

[30] Although a combination of disease and strategic missteps by Dunmore led to the dwindling of his troop's numbers and eventual defeat by 1775, the Royal Ethiopian Regiment performed with valour. General Sir Henry Clinton's Philipsburg Proclamation (1779) expanded upon Dunmore's in providing freedom, protection and land to any slave throughout British colonies that sided with them. "The Philipsburg Proclamation," accessed May 20, 2015, http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/story/revolution/philipsburg.htm; "Who Were the Black Loyalists?" accessed May 20, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/who.htm.

slaves in the US found refuge with the British.[31]

The Black Loyalist migration to British North America began with the 'Company of Negroes' who were evacuated from Boston to Halifax in 1776 with British troops.[32] After the British lost the Revolutionary War, the largest immigration of Black Loyalists to Nova Scotia occurred between April and November 1783 during the Loyalist evacuation from New York harbour to Nova Scotia.[33] Four thousand Blacks were counted among the immigration of thirty thousand Loyalists to the province. Of that number, thirty-five hundred free and escaped slaves are listed in *The Book of Negroes*,[34] a ledger that originated so compensation could be distributed to American slave owners as per US President George Washington's demand that fugitive slaves be returned.[35] Ultimately, British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Guy Carleton (1724-1808) refused Washington's demand.[36] While it contains details on fugitive slaves that were captured and returned to their masters,[37] *The Book of Negroes* is popularly known for containing the names of the over three thousand Blacks – free, refugee, and several slaves owned by higher-ranking British Loyalists, some of whom, had owned large plantations in America – who were evacuated to Nova Scotia (which included New Brunswick until 1784, when it became its own province), Quebec, as well as, Germany, Belgium, the West Indies, and West Africa.[38] Due to the intensity of Nova Scotian anti-Black racism and subjugated to

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[31] "Loyalist History," accessed May 21, 2015, http://blackloyalist.com/?page_id=631.

[32] Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries*, 38; Sharon Robart-Johnson, *Africa's Children: A History of Blacks in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2009) 22. As noted by Canada's Digital Collections website, Black Loyalist.com, Black Loyalists were groups of African Americans that participated in the Revolutionary War (1776-83) with the British in various units, including the Company of Negroes, the Black Brigade, and the Ethiopian Regiment. Among the "dirty words" of postcolonial studies is "pioneer." As stated by *The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies*, critical is understanding the term's meaning in context. During eighteenth-century military parameters, a pioneer "was a soldier whose main task was to provide engineering duties in camp and in combat. These were things such as clearing ground for camps, removing obstructions, digging necessaries, etc. It was not glamorous work, and in the British army, it was often assigned to Blacks." This distinction is also made by Canadian website, BlackLoyalists.com.

[33] Ibid.; Remembering the Black Loyalists, "Who Were the Black Loyalists?," Remembering the Black Loyalists, accessed December 20, 2014, http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/who.htm.

[34] Sir Guy Carleton, first Barron of Dorchester (UK) was the British Commander-in-chief from 1782-83, who appointed commissioners to record the names of Blacks aiming to obtain their certificates of freedom and depart for Canada.

[35] "Who Were the Black Loyalists?" Remembering the Black Loyalists, accessed February 22, 2014, http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/who.htm; "The Book of Negroes," Black Loyalist, accessed February 22, 2014, http://www.blackloyalist.info/sourcedetail/display/15.

[36] Ibid.

[37] "Book of Negroes," *African Nova Scotians: in the Age of Slavery and Abolition*, Nova Scotia Archives, accessed February 12, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/BN.asp.

[38] Origins of the Black Loyalists included Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, as well as parts of New England. Ibid.; Harvey Amani Whitfield, "Black Loyalists and Black Slaves in Maritime Canada," History Compass 5, no. 6 (2007): 1982-1983; Bridglal Pachai, 48; James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 1-18.

abhorrent living conditions, many of the Black Loyalists opted to leave Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone and Trinidad by 1792.[39]

A series of legislative decisions in the US and pre-Confederation Canada also had an impact on the establishment of the African Canadian population. In fact, it is ironic that although pre-Confederation Canada demonstrated a culture of White supremacy equal to that of the US, the *Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Forced Servitude within This Province* (1793), the first piece of Canadian legislation to limit aspects of the slave trade in Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) passed five months and five days *after* the United States of America enacted the first version of the *Fugitive Slave Act* (1793), served to hasten the understanding by African Americans of pre-Confederation Canada as a safe haven. This sentiment increased by 1850, when America's *Fugitive Slave Act* was revised to be more punitive and overreaching by stating it "explicitly authorized the recapture of runaway slaves and authorized state or federal magistrates to return slaves from one state to another."[40] Slave hunter raids frequently crossed the porous border into Canada. While social conditions in Canada may have been advantageous in some respects and rare first-person accounts by former African American fugitive slaves suggest that pre-Confederation Canada offered them a sense of "freedom," "security," and possibilities, racial tensions were never far from the surface.[41] Take, for instance, the following observation by American abolitionist, Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1843) regarding Canadian attitudes on the influx of Black migration there:

> The truth of the matter seems to be that, as long as the colored people form a *very small portion of the population*, and are *dependent*, they will receive protection and favors; but when they increase, and compete with the laboring class for a living, and

[39] "Black Refugees, 1813-1834," Nova Scotia Archives-African Canadians, last updated February 3, 2006, accessed May 25, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=4&Language=English; "Shaping a Community: Black Refugees in Nova Scotia," Lindsay Van Dyk, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, last updated 2015, accessed May 25, 2015, https://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/shaping-a-community-black-refugees-in-nova-scotia-0.

[40] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Life Upon These Shores: Looking at African American History 1513-2008* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 97.

[41] American abolitionist Benjamin Drew's book, *The Refugee: Or, The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (1856) is a collection of first person interviews with fugitive and escaped African American slaves that fled to Upper Canada, written in response to the pro-slavery text, *A Southside View of Slavery* (1854) by Rev. Nehemiah Adams. In his critical introductory chapter to the 2008 reprint of Drew's popular book, African Nova Scotian author George Elliott Clarke provides a refreshing rereading of the implications and interpretations made by Drew that particularly presented Canada as a country free of racism while disavowing any such culture there. See: George Elliot Clarke, Introduction, *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2004), 10-25.

> especially when they begin to aspire to social equality, they cease to be 'interesting negroes' and become 'niggers' [emphasis mine].[42]

Moreover, as pre- and post-Confederation Canada increasingly implemented immigration policies to solve White Canada's perceived "negro problem" between 1784 and 1967, Canada's African Canadian population only reached three percent in 2006.[43]

Also contributing to African Canadian settlement was the War of 1812 (1812-1814) which prompted Black Refugee[44] migration from 1813-1834, providing another opportunity for Blacks in the US and British North America (BNA) to fight for their freedom (and respectability). The British abolitionist stance and promise to African American refugees of freedom, land and provisions in exchange for up to three years, again influenced their allegiance to the British. Despite their commendable and heroic military efforts, however, once in Nova Scotia, Black Refugees, like their predecessors, were denied the assistance they were promised.[45] Harvey Amani Whitfield's in-depth research on the Black Refugees importantly redresses the image of this group as hapless and incompetent. Between 1813 and 1834, Black Refugees brought a diverse set of trades people to the province, including artisans, carpenters, cooks, coopers (barrel makers), fishermen and sailors.[46] Over three thousand of the estimated four thousand African American slaves absconded to British lines to secure their freedom and destinies. Of this number, approximately two thousand arrived on the shores of Nova Scotia and some four hundred were settled in New Brunswick.[47] Like their predecessors, Black Refugees were kept highly segregated from Whites and were settled in

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[42] Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (New England, NH: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 45.

[43] "A Profile of Blacks in Canada: Blacks in the Canadian Population," Designated Group Profiles (2006 Employment Equity Data Report), updated August 13, 2013, accessed August 20, 2015, http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards_equity/eq/pubs_eq/eedr/2006/profiles/page08.shtml

[44] Throughout this thesis the word 'Black' is capitalized in reference to individuals and persons of African heritage. While there is no consistency in the capitalization (or not) of Black migration groups, I choose to capitalize them.

[45] Ibid., 70; Donald H Claremont and Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, Third Edition (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press and Women's Press, 1999), 29. The cycle of promising freedom, land and supplies to Blacks for their allegiance, then denying what was promised was frequent. It would take twenty-five years before most Black Refugees of Preston received the grants they were promised. The impact of the harsh natural and racially-imposed barriers that stagnated Black Nova Scotian community growth is reflected in the nearly one-third of the estimated 3,500 Blacks who left Nova Scotia voluntarily between 1792 and 1821. See: James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002);
Bridglal Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing, 2007).

[46] "Black Refugees, 1813-1834,"Novs Scotia Archives-African Canadians, last updated February 3, 2006, accessed May 25, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=4&Language=English.

[47] Ibid.

communities, including "Preston (the largest community), Hammonds Plains, Beechville ("Refugee Hill"), Five Mile Plains, Beaverbank, Prospect Road, Halifax, Dartmouth, and elsewhere. (fig. 1.2)"[48]

Fig. 1.2. Historical Black settlements in Nova Scotia
© Nova Scotia Museum 2001.
http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/index.htm

The end of slavery came into effect throughout most British Colonies on August 1, 1834. On that date, over eight hundred thousand Black persons in colonial Canada, parts of the Caribbean and parts of Africa were freed, further bolstering British North America's identity and reputation as a safe haven for African Americans. A quintessential example of this correlation between "freedom" and British North America is evidenced in Canada's celebrated connection to the Underground Railroad (UGR), a purported route to freedom and opportunity (fig. 1.3). Operational as early as the 1780s, the UGR did not take on its popular moniker until the 1830s.[49] The network was comprised of a series of clandestine cells and safe houses that lead from the American South to the abolition-friendly Northern states, and further into BNA. Canadian terminuses included British Columbia, Southern Ontario (St. Catherine's, Windsor, Chatham, North Buxton, Niagara Falls, Amherstberg and Owen Sound), Quebec, and Nova Scotia. The UGR also provided escape south into Mexico.

[48] Ibid. Blacks were not settled exclusively in Nova Scotia but throughout the Atlantic provinces.
[49] Historica Canada, "Underground Railroad," accessed February 18, 2015, http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/events.php?themeid=21&id=6.

Fig. 1.3. Underground Railroad map
© National Geographic Society
http://education.nationalgeographic.com/maps/undergroundrailroad/

The appeal of BNA in the minds of free and enslaved African Americans is understandable given the racialized climate of the United States. However, as slavery was abolished it was promptly replaced by domestic and menial labour in the American North. The "peculiar institution" continued unfettered in the Southern states due to high demand for cotton, tobacco and rice crops, economic staples that greatly profited from cheap slave labour. Combined with the *Fugitive Slave Act* (1850), an attempt to appease Southern Secessionists that leveed steep fines against persons aiding runaway slaves, denied slaves trial by jury, and "forcibly compelled citizens to assist in the capture of slaves,"[50] notably increased the abducting and selling of free African Americans into slavery by bounty hunters.[51] There was also the *Dred Scott* decision (1857) that ruled abolition constitutionally

[50] "Fugitive Slave Acts: 1850 Law,"published 2009, accessed May 25, 2015, History.com, http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fugitive-slave-acts.
[51] An example is the case of Solomon Northrup. Born to formerly enslaved parents, African American Solomon Northup (1808–c.1863) and his siblings grew up free. He worked as a farmer and musician but was drugged, kidnapped and sold into slavery by a pair of unscrupulous American men in 1841. "Solomon Northup," The Biography.com website, accessed May 29, 2015, http://www.biography.com/people/solomon-northup-21333433.

illegal, and deemed *all* persons of African heritage non-citizens by virtue of their race. By 1860, four million African Americans were still enslaved in the American South.[52]

White suprematism and negrophobia were cultural and systemic realities in pre- and post-Confederation Canada. In his analysis of early Parliamentary discussions from 1813 regarding the provision of support to the Black Refugees, Pachai notes that the British Crown was already expressing "alarm and concern [at the] frequent arrival of Negroes and Mulattoes" into Canada. The Crown could not see any reason as to why "public funds should be spent on settlers whose character, principles and habits had not been previously investigated."[53] This resulted in the British Government sharply limiting Black immigration to Canada in 1815. Astutely connecting past anti-Black racism with contemporary Canadian legislation, Pachai comments:

> A careful analysis of the call by the provincial politicians of 1815 to prohibit black immigration to Nova Scotia shows how deep-rooted racial discrimination and racial bigotry were in this province as they were elsewhere. When one compares this call with the employment equity programmes of the 1980s or the human rights legislation since the 1970s or the philosophy underlying the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982, one is struck by the distant origins of conflicts in race relations in Nova Scotia.[54]

Of note in Pachai's observation, although not exclusive to Canada, is the colonial practice of instrumentalizing the land against non-White people through the establishment of unofficial and official tactics such as immigration policies designed for the preferential positioning of European peoples and sustaining the myth of White supremacy. Such forms of institutionalized or implicit racism perpetuated by the dominant group demonstrate how land is employed as a central tool of ethnic dispossession. This central feature of colonialism in which people of African heritage are ranked low within the European ethnic world order serves to rationalize the omissions of early African Canadian artists in history and demonstrate the interrelationships between practice, privilege and place, the last in terms of landscapes real and imagined.

Landscape and Art (1840-1900)

The mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century is recognized as the Golden Age of landscape painting in Western art although the natural world has been recorded in art since antiquity. It was

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[52] Marcyliena Morgan, *Language, Discourse and Power in African American Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20.
[53] Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries*, 81.
[54] Ibid.

not until the mid-seventeenth century in England in the waning years of the Georgian era and into the Victorian era, that landscape as art and socio-political concept took passionate cultural hold and the natural world became worthy as a central subject in painting. This movement also spawned popular interest in animal, genre, and still-life painting. Until being elevated to an accepted genre in Britain by the late eighteenth century, landscape ranked low among the hierarchy of genres. During this period, Britain's imperial might, politically and economically, soared as a result of a successful campaign of imperial expansion and heightened colonial trade throughout the Americas, Caribbean and Asia. This, along with the blossoming rise of the industrial age, contributed to "an increase of national wealth" and "a powerful new [White] middle class."[55] Imperialism's profoundly limited understanding of and respect for non-White societies gravely affected the movements of Africans throughout North America. Bookended by slavery and racist stereotypes, the presence of African people on Canadian soil acutely highlight the contradictory Eurocentric cultural constructs of freedom and landscape as site and art.

British colonial interests in the Americas provided some of the earliest artistic views of Canada either as cartography, survey or landscape. White explorers, such as "military officers, settlement leaders, administrators, surveyors, government clerks, [their] sisters, wives and/or daughters, and members of the Christian clergy,"[56] comprise the first progenitors of landscape painting in Canada. Among the earliest and rare images of Black Canadians pictured in a Canadian painting is *A Black Wood Cutter at Shelburne* (1784) (fig. 1.4). Although debatable as to if this watercolour can be considered a landscape painting, Captain Lieutenant William Booth (1748-1826) painted this watercolour of a Black Loyalist cutting wood outdoors while stationed at the troubled Shelburne, NS settlement from 1786-1789.[57] Another early painting depicting an African Canadian family in Nova Scotia's landscape is an unnamed watercolour (c. 1835) by British military artist Robert Petley (1812-1869) (fig. 1.5). Always at the behest of the beholder, landscape paintings, subjective, selective views of a natural scene (at times fictionalized, perhaps, through omitting representations of the poor and/or non-White persons), can be understood as quintessential snap-

[55] Albert Edward Richardson, Georgian England Second Edition (London, UK: JM Classic Editions, 2008), 1-4.; Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers "Introduction: Georgian Geographies?" in Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 1-3.
[56] Marilyn J. MacKay, *Picturing the Land: Narrating Territories in Canadian Landscape Art, 1500-1950* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 33.
[57] Michel Hardy-Vallée, "Our Common Lot: Portraying the United Empire Loyalists, 1785–1929", accessed February 28, 2015, http://canadianportraits.concordia.ca/exhibitions/8_HARDY-VALLEE-NPG2-FINAL_DV.pdf. Hardy-Vallée suggests another possible work. Booth mentions in one of his correspondence of a Black man selling lumber in Shelburne although it is unknown if this is the same person he painted.

shots of conflict. The examples above however stand apart from this tradition. As military artists, documentary was the focus although the artists' intent in the inclusion of these subjects remain unknown.

Fig.1.4. William Booth (1748-1826), *A Black Wood Cutter at Shelburne* (1788), Library and Archives Canada, http://blackhistoryincanada.ca/items/show/2

Fig. 1.5. *Bedford Basin Near Halifax (Nova Scotia*), 1835, Robert Petley (1812-1869) Library and Archives Canadahttp://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/archives.asp?ID=108

According to art historian R. H. Hubbard, the tradition of landscape painting proper in Canada was easily a century behind that of the US.[58] Canonical Canadian art historical texts including Hubbard's *Canadian Landscape Painting 1670-1930* (1973), Russell J. Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History* (2007), Marilyn J. MacKay's *Picturing the Land: Narrating Territories in Canadian Landscape Art, 1500-1950* (2011), and Denis Reid's *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (2012) identify the Maritime region as a central base for the British and a key site of early Eastern Canadian landscape painting in English colonial Canada. British colonial notions of landscape had a negative impact on the experiences of African Canadians, and notably their participation in Canadian society and culture. Eva Mackey's article, "Death by Landscape: Race, Nature and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology," critically examines the intersections between discourses and artistic representations of Canadian landscape, and how those discourses and representations fuel lived and imagined understandings of Canadian identity, or more precisely, White Canadian identity. According to Mackey, defining a distinct Canadian identity was paramount over the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and much of those discourses centred around whether or not Canada was its own nation or an extension of Britain and its ideals. She argues that there is a core link between British colonial understandings of landscape as site, art, national identity and the status of non-White people, stating that "symbols of nationalism are used flexibly to differentiate and define the boundaries of the imagined nation that fluctuates between defining "others" and nature as noble and/or ignoble savages, or as male or female depending on the needs of nation building."[59] Within this complex and highly stratified framework produced from a distinctly Eurocentric preoccupation with identity and social categorization, "women, the colonized, the racialized and the working classes" were perceived therefore as being as closer to nature in an oppositional position to men and the elite."[60] With this confounding structuring of ethnicity, place, privilege and access designed and understood within a racial hierarchy privileging Whites, it stands to reason how people of African heritage were consistently marginalized from participating fully in Canadian society.

In contrast to the abundance of American and British scholarship on representations of Blacks as artists and agents in their respective countries, scholarship on the Canadian context is dominated by analyses on *how* African Canadians are represented. Countering and contributing to the under-explored aspects of early African Canadian artistic production, the following sections

[58] R.H. Hubbard, Canadian Landscape Painting 1670-1930 (Madison, W.I.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 7.
[59] Eva Mackey, "Death by Landscape: Race, Nature and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology" *Canadian Women's Studies* 20 no. 2, 125.
[60] Ibid.

present case studies on African Nova Scotian landscape George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906) and Edith Hester McDonald (later Brown; 1886-1954).

SECTION TWO

Art and Colour Lines: George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906)

Focusing on the known details of mixed-race African Canadian artist, George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906) and his only known painting, *View of Town of Shelburne* (1885), this case study attends to miscegenation, belonging and art making (figs. 2.1 and 2.2). It also examines correlations between race and its malleability across geographical borders with additional reference to McCarthy's African American contemporary, Grafton Tyler Brown (1841-1918). An acclaimed late nineteenth century American lithographer and painter of British Columbia landscapes, Tyler Brown "passed" as White so as to facilitate pursuing his calling as an artist.

Fig. 2.1. Hand coloured photograph of George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906), n.d. Source. http://www.dartmouthheritagemuseum.ns.ca/wp-content/themes/pdf/PIONEERSa.pdf.

Fig. 2.2. *View of Town of Shelburne* (1885), George H. McCarthy (1860-1901)

Born in Shelburne, Nova Scotia in 1860, George McCarthy died in his adoptive home of Trinidad in 1906. Information remains elusive regarding McCarthy's education and engagement in the arts. I argue that his stylistically naturalistic *plein air* painting, *View of Town of Shelburne* (1885), depicting an otherwise mundane day in Shelburne, is the earliest known painting by an African Canadian. In the Canadian context, the life and art of African American artist, Robert S. Duncanson (1821-1872) stands as the premiere example of an African Canadian artist. Overwhelmingly identified as 'Canadian' through his presumed Canadian roots, Duncanson stands as the most represented Black artist in major Canadian museums (in Montreal and Toronto). The consistent assertion of Duncanson's Canadian identity continues to provide the double cachet of having a person of colour who was a highly talented and recognized artist of international acclaim, tied to Canada's art historical and cultural roots, while propagating Canada's image and identity as a

tolerant, multicultural society.[61] Yet, the myth of Duncanson's Canadian heritage presents a series of claims that merit correction. Canadian museums collect and display Duncanson's work as 'Robert Scott Duncanson', documenting a connection to a 'Scottish-Canadian father.[62] Art historian and curator, Joseph D. Ketner in his book *The Emergence of the African American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson* (1993), provides evidence that the artist was actually born Robert Seldon Duncanson,[63] circa 1821 in Fayette, New York, descended from freed Virginian African-American slaves.[64] The significance of this detail is critical in its potential for prompting a revision of Canada's art historical record. While having spent time living in Canada – in fact "during his stay, Duncanson helped foster a school of landscape painting, influencing Canadian artists such as Otto Jacobi, C. J. Way, and Duncanson's pupil, Allan Edson, who would become one of the country's formative landscape artists"[65]– acknowledgment of Duncanson's true American roots thereby situates George Henry McCarthy as the first known fine artist of African Canadian descent.

An original work in oil on canvas, McCarthy's *View of Town of Shelburne*, like many such quaint landscape paintings of the period, is overtly void of any of the real racial unrest experienced on the land depicted. Painted when the artist was twenty-five years old, the highly finished work adopts the Academic painting characteristic of the period. A generous two-thirds of the canvas depicts the rising glow of a warming, morning sky. The middle ground contains houses and fields, which quite notably includes, at left, the original Christ Anglican Church. This church burnt down in 1971 and was rebuilt a year later on its original site at the corner of Hammond and Ann Streets in 1972. Also recognizable to the right of the painting's composition is Baptist Church, situated on Mowatt St. between Ann and John Streets. It is the oldest Black Canadian "Baptist Church within the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, and is a continuation of the ministry begun by Black

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[61] An area that requires more study in relation to studies of cultural citizenship: African Canadian fine artists of acclaim who relocated and made their careers in the United States or elsewhere, such as Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828-1901), or Artis Lane (b. 1927) and not 'reclaimed' as Canadian artists.

[62] This is evidenced for instance at The National Gallery of Canada, as well as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, where the didactic for Duncanson's painting *Sunset Study* (1863), describes the artist as having a Scottish-Canadian Father. For instance, Visiting The Montreal Museum of Fine Art (Montreal, Quebec) in July 2013, the description accompanying Duncanson's painting, Sunset Study (1863), stated "…his father, a Canadian of Scottish decent."

[63] Joseph D. Ketner II, The Emergence of the African-American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson, 1821-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 9-14.

[64] Eve M. Hahn, *Condemning Slavery With a Paintbrush*, (July 14, 2011), New York Times, posted, July 14, 2011, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/15/arts/design/painter-robert-s-duncanson-and-2-jewelry-exhibitions.html?_r=0.

[65] Lucinda Moore**,** *America's Forgotten Landscape Painter: Robert S. Duncanson,* http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/americas-forgotten-landscape-painter-robert-s-duncanson-112952174/?page=3 (Accessed June, 2015)

Loyalist preacher, David George."[66] From these landmarks (fig. 2.3), it is believed that McCarthy painted this scene from somewhere along Hammond Street, looking north or northeast.[67] The foreground of this work depicts grassy plots of farmland, some with animals grazing, such as what could be a highland cow and a horse at the lower center of the picture. Tightly placed at the painting's bottom right edge, adjacent to the cow and horse, are three barely distinguishable persons. Produced in 1885 during landscape painting's Golden Age, McCarthy's painting can be read as a testament to Black endurance within Nova Scotia's rooted anti-Black society. Notably, roughly a hundred years before McCarthy painting this scene, Shelburne was the site of Canada's first recorded anti-Black race riot instigated by the town's White citizens.

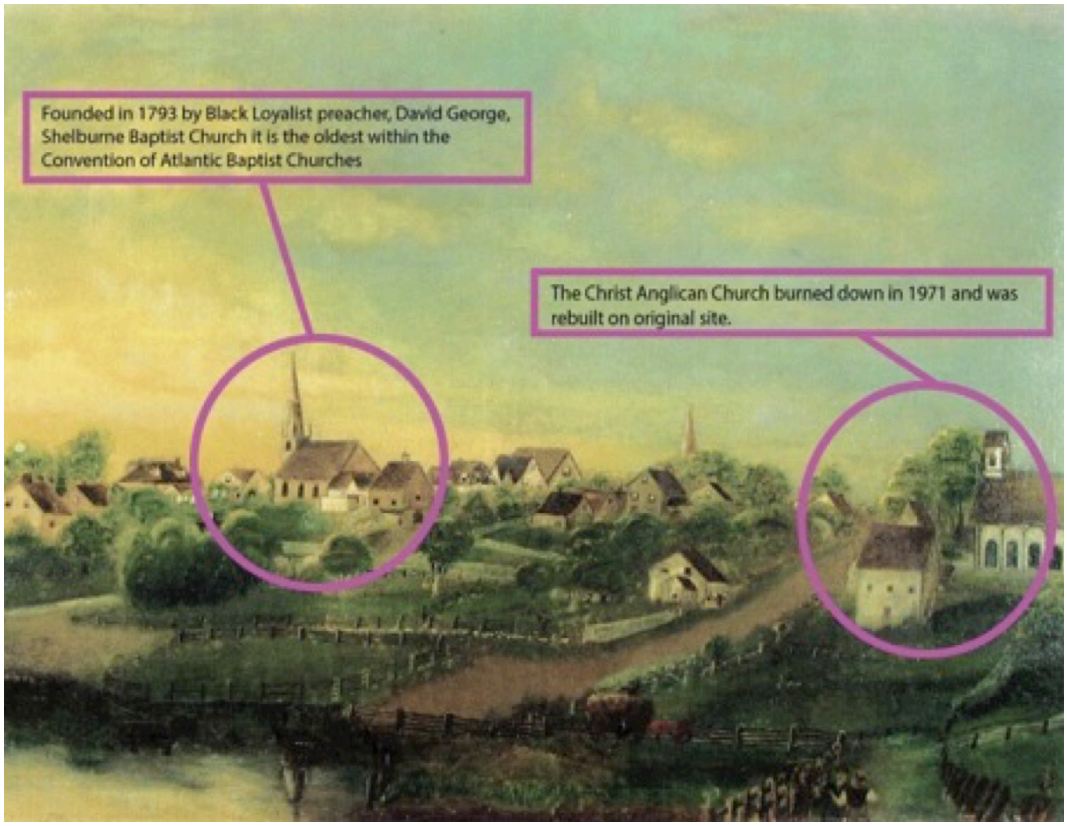

Fig. 2.3. *View of Town of Shelburne* (1885), highlighting landmarks, George H. McCarthy (1860-1906), oil on canvas, 109cm x 79cm, Shelburne Heritage Museum (Shelburne, N. S.)

[66] Deborah Hill, Program Coordinator, Black Loyalist Heritage Society. Email communication with Adrienne Johnson dated, Wednesday January 15, 2014, 3:34 PM.
[67] My thanks to Acting Curator, Leah Griffiths, of the Shelburne County Museum (Shelburne, NS) for her generous assistance in assisting my research on this painting.

Since Samuel de Champlain's[68] arrival, Nova Scotia has been a site of violent waves of colonial conquest, human displacement, and resistance. Formerly Port Roseway, Shelburne, NS was founded in 1783. Located on the harbour, it was a significant shipbuilding area until 1900. Other key industries included lumber, fish processing, barrel manufacture (coopering), institutional furniture, granite monuments, and marine supplies; all were industries where African Canadians, such as the Black Loyalists, Pioneers and Refugees, were highly skilled.[69] By the summer of 1783 or 1784, accounts indicate that Nova Scotia was unprepared for the rapid influx of over 30,000 Loyalists to the province.[70] The settlement of these newcomers was imperative as Blacks were essential muscle for public works projects. Settlement was mostly successful for the large group of disbanded White soldiers. Black Loyalists, who were initially "promised free land (100 acres minimum) and rations for three years,"[71] were segregated "three to six kilometres away from Shelburne in Birchtown (approximately twenty-five minutes to an hour from Shelburne by foot). Birchtown was founded by Colonel Stephen Bluke and named after General Samuel Birch who devised and issued Black Loyalists their certificates of freedom, but only 187 out of 649 Black men received land and rations, both pitiful in quality and quantity.[72] As a consequence, many Black Loyalists spent harsh winters subsisting in pit houses – rudimentary shelters whose construction suggests intercultural exchange between the Mi'kmaq and Blacks (fig. 2.4), suffered malnutrition, and were often ravaged by infections and disease.[73] The cruellest irony is that a significant number of free Blacks resorted to re-indenturing themselves to survive.

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[68] Samuel de Champlain (1574-1635) was a "cartographer, explorer, colonial administrator" also recognized as "The Father of New France." Historica Canada, "Samuel de Champlain," accessed September 3, 2015, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/samuel-de-champlain/.

[69] Richard Reid, "Black British North American Sailors in the Civil War" The Northern Mariner/le marin du nord, XXI No. 1, (January 2011), 1-26,

[70] Other settlements include: Brindley (Brinley) Town (near Digby), Preston, Birchtown (Guysborough County), Negro Line (now Southville, Digby County), and Birchtown (Princedale-Virginia East-Graywood area, Annapolis County). A group of about 170 settled at Old Tracadie Road (Guysborough County). "African Nova Scotians: in the Age of Slavery and Abolition: The Black Loyalists, 1783-1792", accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/africanns/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=2&Language=English.

[71] "A difficult life for Black Loyalists," accessed May 29, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/hardship.htm. In terms of land distribution, "A family was supposed to receive 100 acres for each family head and 50 acres for each person in the household (wife, son, daughter or servant)." Robin W. winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 24-40.

[72] Ibid.; The only exception, after a four year wait, was Colonel Stephen Blucke (b. 1752) who lead the militia unit of the Black Pioneers during the American Revolution and received 200 acres with his wife Margaret and their daughter Isabella.

[73] "A difficult life for Black Loyalists," accessed May 29, 2015, http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/hardship.htm

Fig, 2,4. Exterior and interior views of a Black Loyalist pit house scaled replica
Black Loyalist Heritage Society, http://blackloyalist.com/?page_id=10

The rapid increase in population made employment opportunities scarce for White Loyalists. It was far worse for Black Loyalists who, although also promised descent land, were given acidic, rocky and insufficiently-sized land incapable for subsistence by farming. Adding to racial tensions was the preference of hiring semi-skilled Black tradesmen who were paid lower wages than Whites for their labour. The prospect among Whites of having to lower their rates, combined with the entirety of their discouraging situation, reached a boiling point where Whites vehemently blamed Blacks and those who employed them, for their misery.[74] The relative harmony that existed between Blacks (free persons and slaves) and Whites for fifteen months, as Winks notes, ended violently on July 26 or 27, 1784 when "hundreds of disbanded White soldiers, still in possession of their arms," violently attacked the free Blacks of Shelburne.[75] According to the diary of surveyor Benjamin Marston who had the unfortunate task of land distribution, some twenty homes were destroyed and the great majority of Blacks were expelled to neighbouring Birchtown whose already economically-strained population of approximately 270, spiked to about 1,500. Among the destruction of Black property during the raid on Black Shelburnians was African Canadian preacher David George's church and home that ministered to a mixed congregation.[76] The terror expanded to Birchtown with raids continuing for over a month.[77]

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[74] Ibid.; Robin W. Winks' *The Blacks in Canada, A History* 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 38-40.
[75] Robin W. Winks' *The Blacks in Canada, A History* 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 37.
[76] "An Account of Life of Mr. David George from S. L. A. given by himself," accessed May 29, 2015, http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/george_a_life.htm#riot. George remained undeterred and continued his ministry in Birchtown, then Halifax, Nova Scotia until 1792, when he and other Blacks voluntarily accepted the British offer to relocate in Sierra Leone. Unfortunately however, "Upon arrival in Sierra Leone, David George and his Black Baptists had similar problems to the ones they faced in Nova Scotia. The white people of Sierra Leone were just as ignorant and racist as many of those in Nova Scotia."

George Henry McCarthy: Challenging the Colour Line

Although racism and racial segregation remained palpable in Shelburne, some Blacks and Whites have been known to work side-by-side within Shelburne's seaport economy. One example is the McCarthy family. Several generations of McCarthy men would prove to be venerable ship and sail craftsmen as well as highly skilled sea captains. The McCarthy family's roots can be traced back to 1811 through the (not too uncommon) inter-racial marriage of his great-grandparents, Hetty Dight (b. 1782), a black woman of whom little is known and a white Loyalist merchant, Captain Charles McCarthy (dates unknown). Presumed to have been married for nineteen years, according to the 1871 and 1881 Canadian census, they had at least seven children of which the identity and presence of three of their sons – George J. McCarthy, William T. McCarthy and Charles D. McCarthy – can be confirmed.[78] In Shelburne, a significant shipbuilding area at this time, these three sons would prove to be successful maritime entrepreneurs, a legacy that would continue among later generations of McCarthys. The son of William T. McCarthy and Ann (Warrington) McCarthy, George Henry McCarthy and his brothers, Robert, Albert, Edgar and Charles, would each continue to make their mark as entrepreneurs, particularly in the Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum sector. Gradually gaining substantial holdings in Trinidad's bitumen lake deposits the McCarthys amassed much wealth with the formation of the New Trinidad Petroleum Company.[79]

The McCarthys also excelled in philanthropy and the field of education. McCarthy's only known sister, Anna, would be distinguished by becoming "the first black teacher to obtain a first class license in Nova Scotia."[80] An 1884 issue of the Dartmouth Times proclaimed, "Miss Anna McCarthy of Shelburne, who has been appointed teacher of the Dartmouth Coloured School is the first coloured person in Nova Scotia who has obtained a Grade C License."[81] Another younger sibling of McCarthy, Joseph W. McCarthy, was a BA and BSc graduate from King's College (Windsor, N.S.), earned a PhD in Science, and was "Assistant Professor of Agricultural Chemistry from 1920-1936 at MacDonald College [Montreal]" [82] in the Faculty of Agricultural and

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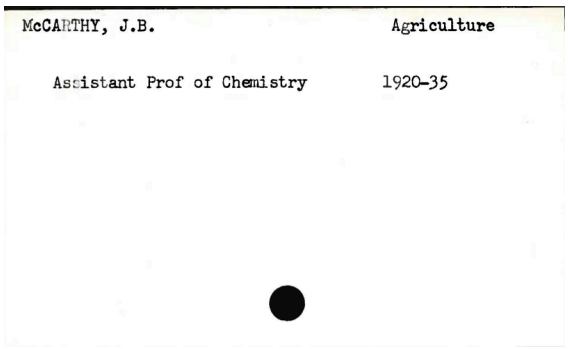
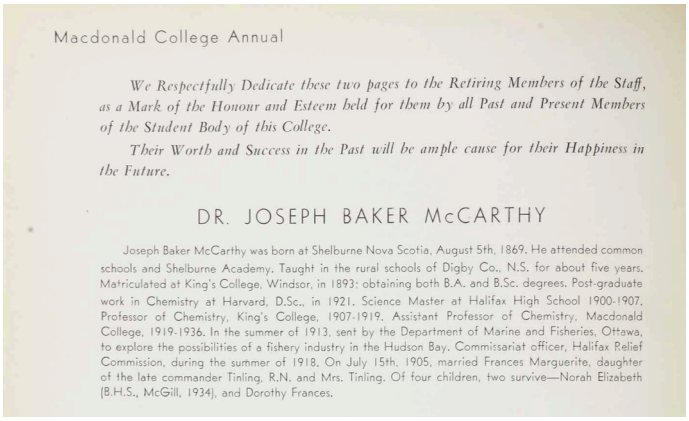
[77] Back History Canada.ca, http://blackhistorycanada.ca/timeline.php?id=1700; "Birchtown, Nova Scotia" African Nova Scotian Affairs, accessed January 12, 2015, http://ansa.novascotia.ca/birchtown.
[78] Lewis M. Jackson, "Those Remarkable McCarthy's" The Coast Guard, Shelburne, NS. Tue February 24, 1998. 4-5.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.; 5.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Email correspondence with Mary Ellen Worgan Houde, Supervisor, Reading Room McGill University Archives Rare Books and Special Collections, July 13, 2013, and with Gordon Burr, Senior Archivist, Collections Management and Digital Services, McGill University Archives (Montreal, QC), April 3, 2014.

Environmental Sciences (fig. 2.5-2.6).[83] Research reveals that the McCarthys' engagement and participation in visual arts continued in Trinidad through John W. McCarthy (n.d.) whose "achievements as an entrepreneur were only surpassed by his reputation as a philanthropist"[84] in association with the Royal Victoria Institute, now National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago (fig. 2.7- 2.8).


McCARTHY, J.B. Agriculture

Assistant Prof of Chemistry 1920-35

Fig. 2.5. Joseph Baker McCarthy's staff card, MacDonald College, McGill University Archives Rare Books and Special Collections


Macdonald College Annual

We Respectfully Dedicate these two pages to the Retiring Members of the Staff, as a Mark of the Honour and Esteem held for them by all Past and Present Members of the Student Body of this College.

Their Worth and Success in the Past will be ample cause for their Happiness in the Future.

DR. JOSEPH BAKER McCARTHY

Joseph Baker McCarthy was born at Shelburne Nova Scotia, August 5th, 1869. He attended common schools and Shelburne Academy. Taught in the rural schools of Digby Co., N.S. for about five years. Matriculated at King's College, Windsor, in 1893: obtaining both B.A. and B.Sc. degrees. Post-graduate work in Chemistry at Harvard, D.Sc., in 1921. Science Master at Halifax High School 1900-1907, Professor of Chemistry, King's College, 1907-1919, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, Macdonald College, 1919-1936. In the summer of 1913, sent by the Department of Marine and Fisheries, Ottawa, to explore the possibilities of a fishery industry in the Hudson Bay. Commissariat officer, Halifax Relief Commission, during the summer of 1918. On July 15th, 1905, married Frances Marguerite, daughter of the late commander Tinling, R.N. and Mrs. Tinling. Of four children, two survive—Norah Elizabeth (B.H.S., McGill, 1934), and Dorothy Frances.

Fig. 2.6. Retirement notice for Joseph Baker McCarthy (1936), *The Clan MacDonald* [student yearbook]. Montreal: McGill University, 1936.

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.; 5.

Fig. 2.7. Exterior view of The National Museum and Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, Dutch Wikipedia.org https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/34/Trinidad_national_museum_2006-23-02.JPG

Fig. 2.8. An interior view of The Notional Museum and Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, www.guardian.co.tt

As rich as the McCarthy family legacy is in its demonstration of African Canadian ingenuity, perseverance and entrepreneurship, questions remain regarding avenues available for African Canadian artists to exercise artistic agency and participation in the art world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada. George McCarthy's African and White ancestry further raise questions regarding how White Canadians understood and responded to racialized persons when their ethnicity was visibly ambiguous. How did White Canadian understandings of, and responses to race manifest across the country? With this in mind, McCarthy's example raises intriguing questions including: were art classes segregated or not? Did McCarthy use his light complexion to gain access to artistic study – did he need to? Where and by whom might African Canadian artists receive training? Where could they show their works?

This context of Black struggle outlines the intersections of race, place and African Canadian avenues and aspirations toward artistic professionalism. The question of who had access to culture and professionalization is rooted in the "four centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the racialized subordination of people of African descent [which] produced a construction of race [globally]."[85] In addition to establishing the contemporaneous "modern world racial system,"[86] slavery inured the culturally devastating context of colourism, a global practice with an acute economic and White supremacist motivation in Euro-American societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which persons with lighter skin complexions were privileged over persons with darker skin complexions, a prejudice that continues today.[87] To be sure, Canadians of African heritage and Whites have experienced the sting of colourism, albeit from piercingly different perspectives. For instance, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while Blacks were straightening their hair and opting to stay out of the sun so as not to get darker, or worse, bleaching their skin to lighten their complexions, to achieve the mirage of White beauty (or the achievement of "respectability" and "'acceptance"), White people – predominantly White women – were doing as much as they could to stay as porcelain as possible because darker skin was associated with the lower classes.[88]

There is little information in Canadian academic texts on African Canadian artists of this period, never mind on mixed race African Canadians, however, much research is available on the topic in the US. In view of the social, cultural and historical proximity between both nations, in part due to the fluidity of African migration between countries with racism as a factor, the example of African American lithographer and landscapist, Grafton Tyler Brown (1841-1918), who is presumed to have one-eighth African ancestry and residing in Victoria, BC from 1882-84 (fig. 2.9), can be

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[85] Leith Mullings, "Race and Globalization: Race from Below," in *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11.

[86] Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 94-108. In his chapter, "Modern World Racial System," Winant argues that instead of becoming less central to our social, cultural and political processes, race is more influential than ever, continuing to underscore the machinations of contemporaneous societies.

[87] Keith C. Cheng, "Demystifying Skin Color and "Race"," in *Racism in the 21st Century: An Empirical Analysis of Skin Color* (East Lansing, MI: Springer Publications, 2008), 3-24. A long and highly complex issue, the act of privileging lighter skin complexions reached its apex during the time of trans-Atlantic slavery ensuring its economic viability. From skin lightening creams to chemical hair straitening treatments and hair extensions, the pressure for Blacks in North America to 'become White' continues to be relentless, and its psychological impacts are incalculable. For more, see: Susannah Walker, *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2007); Roland E. Hall, ed., Racism in the 21st Century: An Empirical Analysis of Skin Color (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008), particularly, Margaret Hunter, "The Cost of Color: What We Pay for Being Black and Brown".

[88] Brian McKenna, "Melanoma Whitewash: Millions at Risk of Injury or Death because of Sunscreen Deceptions" in *Killer commodities: public health and the corporate production of harm* eds. Merrill Singer, Hans Baer (Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press, 2008), 151.

useful in exploring how McCarthy may have used his light skinned complexion to fulfil his entrepreneurial, artistic interests.

Fig. 2.9. Photograph of Grafton Tyler Brown (1883, Victoria, BC.)
Royal BC Museum, BC Archives, Victoria, A-08775

The eldest of four sons, Grafton Tyler Brown was freeborn in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to light-skinned parents Thomas and Wilhelmina Brown (dates unknown) and is credited as being the first African American lithographer to capture landscape views of the Pacific West Coast.[89] The light-skinned Brown family did what some African persons of light complexions and mixed ethnicity did at the time, which was to 'pass' as White to avoid persecution and importantly, to secure better opportunities. It must not be forgotten that, as Robert Chandler notes, Blacks were barred from education and severely restricted to menial employment. There is reason to believe that the Brown family's move to Canada was beneficial as Chandler notes that the 1850 Census lists the Brown children as attending school, a privilege at the time. Brown left Pennsylvania for Sacramento, CA in 1858, where due to employment barriers against African Americans, he worked in the service

[89] Robert J. Chandler. *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist, Grafton Tyler Brown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 3-19.

industry as a porter and a hotel steward at the St. George Hotel.[90] In the three years he was in Sacramento, censuses noted Brown as "Black", "Coloured", and "mulatto"[91] Brown moved from Sacramento to San Francisco in 1861, where presenting himself as a White man he eventually found employment under Charles C. Kuchel (1820-1864) at his lithography firm, Kuchel and Dresel.

In addition to Brown actively avoiding official labelling as black and not publicizing his African ancestry, there were two significant factors to Brown's successful passing into White San Francisco society. Noting that during California's Gold Rush era (1848-1859) prompted the State's cosmopolitan character through the migration of various ethnicities that flocked to the region in hopes of better opportunities; generally, passing "occurred regularly and quietly" not only there but throughout the US.[92] Chandler, citing Daniel J. Sharfstein's *The Invisible Line: Three Families and the Secret Journey from Black to White* (2011), and Bliss Boyard's *One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life* (2007), Chandler demonstrates that passing was not a straight-forward matter of simply looking White, but was a layered inter-play of the visual and social norms. For instance, by 1862, when Brown was establishing his whiteness in San Francisco society, Brown registered to vote on August 7, which as Chandler notes, allowed Brown to "publically [leave] the black sphere with its legal and social restraints and entered into the White world," thereby publically showing he was exercising his privileges as a White man.[93] The second factor – taking place within the year of Brown's arrival to San Francisco – was the political change from Democrat to Republican with the election of American President Abraham Lincoln in 1860. While this pivotal change in American history and specifically African American history does not suggest the state of California was a haven for African Americans, and that anti-Black racism and White supremacy were no longer an issue; as Chandler observes, this political change correlated with a growing social sentiment toward racial equality for everyone in California.[94]

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[90] John Lutz, "Grafton Tyler Brown" *The Missing British Columbia Paintings of Grafton Tyler Brown*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/~hist66/gtbrown/gtbrown.html.; Robert J. Chandler. *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist, Grafton Tyler Brown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 28.

[91] John Lutz, "Grafton Tyler Brown" *The Missing British Columbia Paintings of Grafton Tyler Brown*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/~hist66/gtbrown/gtbrown.html; Robert J. Chandler. *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist, Grafton Tyler Brown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 30.

[92] Ibid., Chandler, 32. Also interesting are the instances of passing in reverse. See: Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Across the Color Line* (New York, NY: Penguin Group Inc., 2009).

[93] Ibid., 49, 35. Also of note, Chandler's research reveals that Brown's brother David also passed for White. David's November 21, 1899 death certificate lists him as "a single 51 year old white man."

[94] Ibid., 35, 22. A key example presented by Chandler supporting the sentiment for racial equality in California is that San Francisco did not fully endorse the "so-called one-drop rule."

Fig. 2.10. Residence of A. Gordon, Redwood City / Gordon's Chute,
San Mateo Co. California / Ranch of A. Gordon, San Gregorio, California (n.d)
Source. http://www.oxfordaasc.com

Fig. 2.11. Stock certificate for Wells Fargo (transaction date 1877)
Grafton Tyler Brown & Co.
Source. www.usace.army.mil

At the end of the American Civil War in 1865, over 600,000 people lost their lives over the dividing issue of enslaving Blacks. Then twenty-four years-old, Brown became senior partner when he was given the opportunity to run Kuchel and Dresel with Edward Harnett by Kuchel's widow

Louisa after Kuchel's death on December 20, 1864. The firm had been in a precarious financial situation as early as 1859 due to Kuchel's financial mismanagement, and was near ruin when Brown arrived at the firm in early 1861.[95] In 1865, after receiving financial assistance to keep the business afloat from their neighbour, a printer named Jerome T. Painter; Brown renamed the firm Grafton T. Brown, which operated under that name until 1866. That year, Brown renamed the firm Grafton T. Brown & Co. ("Co." stood for Harnett, whose name never appeared on officially).[96] Two years after Canada's initial act of Confederation in 1867, Brown, wanting to expand the business, bought out Harnett, for $2,700 as he was opposed to expansion. Brown paid Harnett $1,000 immediately and borrowed $1,700 (source unknown), paying back that amount within eighteen months.[97] To Brown's credit, under his leadership the firm became the premier "in colour printing" on the Pacific Coast.[98] Brown's press ranked highly in San Francisco for producing the finest bank cheques, bill heads, marine views, landscapes, music titles, plans, maps and views, and state and county bonds (figs. 2.10 and 2.11).

Leaving San Francisco to pursue a career change 1882, Brown made his livelihood as a landscape painter, dividing his time between Victoria, BC; Tacoma, WA; Portland, OR; and Helena, MO between 1882 and 1891.[99] His time in Victoria, British Columbia began in 1882, twenty-four years after British Columbia's first wave of Black pioneers emigrated from California to Vancouver and Victoria, BC,[100] when he joined a surveying expedition that travelled east along the Fraser River to Kamloops. There, he produced twelve of twenty oil paintings based on the highly-accurate and detailed sketches from this expedition. The works were publicly exhibited at Victoria's New Colonist Building on Government Street (Victoria, BC) in 1883 (Fig. 2.12- 2.13). During his time in Victoria, Brown found particularly great favour with the local newspaper, *Victoria Colonist*, which followed Brown's *plein air* work with great enthusiasm. Canadian art historian John Lutz notes that although

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[95] Ibid.; 35.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.; 70.

[98] John Lutz, "Grafton Tyler Brown" *The Missing British Columbia Paintings of Grafton Tyler Brown*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/~hist66/gtbrown/gtbrown.html

[99] Robert J. Chandler. *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist, Grafton Tyler Brown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 10; Black Past.org. "Brown, Grafton Tyler (1841-1918)," accessed January 1, 2014, http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/brown-grafton-tyler-1841-1918.

[100] Lisa Smedman, "Photo exhibit captures black history in B.C. Canada Post releases two stamps depicting Afro-Canadians" Vancouver Courier, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www2.canada.com/components/print.aspx?id=3c4a340d-f20c-421e-81b3-e4df191b9791&sponsor=.; Black History Canada, "British Columbia", accessed March 5, 2015, http://blackhistorycanada.ca/topic.php?id=129&themeid=5. It is important to note that unlike Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario, the first Black pioneers to British Columbia chiefly consisted of free persons.

only one of Brown's sketches and eleven of his British Columbia paintings have been located and identified, according to Brown's 1883 exhibition catalogue, it is likely that Brown produced as many as forty paintings, and twenty-four sketches during his time in British Columbia from 1882-1885. According to Chandler, this body of work positions Brown as "Victoria's first landscape painter."[101]

Fig. 2.12. Grafton Tyler Brown's Exhibition catalogue for his 1883 exhibition at the New Colonist Buildings, Victoria, BC.
http://www.igavelauctions.com

[101] Ibid.

Fig. 2.13. *Above the Gorge, Portage Inlet, Victoria, BC.* (1883)
Grafton Brown (1841-1918)
Image: Royal BC Museum, BC Archives http://web.uvic.ca/~hist66/gtbrown/gtbrown.html

Facilitating Brown's realization of his personal and professional aspirations was his subversion of the deeply held, and legally punishable, social rules of the colour line. This unjust racial barrier which persists into the twenty-first century keeps W.E.B. Du Bois' words poignantly relevant over a hundred years since the publication of his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For Brown, the solution was to "pass" as a White person so as to achieve his dreams, increase his economic mobility, and enjoy full rights as an American citizen. It should never be forgotten that nineteenth-century Europe and America were acutely race-conscious and racially stratified. Chandler's research of Brown demonstrates that race is a fluid construct that manifests and is received differently from place to place. Throughout Brown's movements in the U.S. – and critically to his life and career in California – Brown's successes rested, fundamentally, upon convincing Whites that he was "one of them." A letter of condolence speaking of Brown reads, "It is true that he was a colored man, but I always regarded him as the whitest man in all my acquaintance in Mariposa County." The writer continues, "When with him I never had the feeling he was a colored man. It never seemed to occur to me."[102]

[102] Robert J. Chandler. *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist, Grafton Tyler Brown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 31.

In addition to dodging being labelled and identified as Black by census takers, strategies that facilitated Brown's ability to participate in American society as full a citizen included, earning respectability among Whites, and "exercising the privileges of a White man,"[103] such as voting at a time when Blacks were legally barred from the franchise.

On the complicated issue of 'passing' in the American context, Shirley Ann Wilson Moore justly notes "that the concept of race in the United States evolved into a caste system that consigned [chiefly] African Americans (and other people of color) to economic and social segregation."[104] Where White American ethnic purity has been a concern of America and Canada since their colonial inceptions, insuring White American 'purity' and supremacy reached an apex throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as exemplified by America's Jim Crow laws and its 'one-drop rule,' "an arbitrary and scientifically unsupportable standard" that was a "legal and social determinant of racial identity…" governing "social and economic mobility, and stood as a marker of moral character." [105] Moore further argues that "passing" was "a silent 'underground' form of Black resistance,"[106] albeit a divided one within Black communities, since passing could equally be read as "opportunism" or submitting to the adage, 'White is right' – where light-skinned African descended peoples turn their backs on their African heritage altogether.

In *Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process: Race as a Border Concept* (2012), author Robert Bernasconi, in his analysis of racialization, argues that the fluidity and flux of the term 'race', and the subconscious ways in which humans tend to racialize others requires a phenomenological approach if society is to come to grips with how race is seen, understood, thought of and responded to. This approach, states Bernasconi, implicates people to engage with histories of racialization, precisely as those histories impact and inform contemporaneous actions. That said, such an approach, covering times and places, should help liberate our thoughts and discourses from ridged binaries of race.[107]

Building upon research of Ariela J. Gross who coined the term "the borderlands of race" in her book, *What Blood Won't Tell* (2008), an examination of the history of racialization and the criminalization of Black and other people of colour in the United States, Bernasconi, agrees with

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[103] Ibid., 49.
[104] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Passing," in *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown* (Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 183.
[105] Ibid. Linguistic derivatives of Jim Crow and the "one-drop rule" in reference to persons of Black and non-Black (generally White) ancestry include, 'mulatto', 'octoroon', and 'quadroon'.
[106] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Passing," in *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown* (Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 183.
[107] Robert Bernasconi, "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process: Race as a Border Concept," *Research in Phenomenology* 42 no. 2 (2012), 206-288

Gross' statement that "people revealed what race meant for them only when they needed to adjudicate its boundaries, and in drawing these boundaries, they were creating race."[108] The suggestion here is that people tend to think of race as a border concept, since race mixing "blurs the perceived borders between races and causes those borders to shift."[109] As demonstrated in Brown's example, the performance of passing is interactive; the non-racialized person participates in the racialized person's performance through their understandings of White and non-White. Shirley Ann Wilson Moore's framing of this interaction as "presumption of whiteness"[110] directly charges non-Whites to confront their culpability in this act of Black resistance – a resistance that if revealed as a ruse, was unequivocally the fault of the Blacks and punishable by death. Simply put: central to the culture of White supremacy and is the prioritization of whiteness. Brown's journey from Black to White, referred to as passing; the higher value placed on White physical and social attributes inured a particular sense in value of having a light complexion akin to person of European ancestry.

[108] Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 11.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Passing," in *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown* (Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014),

SECTION THREE

Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (1886-1954)

Focusing on the life of African Canadian artist, Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (1886-1954; fig. 3.1) and her 1906 landscape painting which counts among her five known existing paintings, this section examines African Canadian women's cultural production and how they challenged the written and unwritten gender and race-based biases they faced in Nova Scotian society. As Sylvia Hamilton acutely reminds us: "While race has been a major determinant of the Black woman's status, gender has also sharply delineated her condition in Nova Scotian society."[111] Unlike McCarthy, "passing" was not an option for McDonald whose parents were of African ancestry, and did not have light pigmentation. One of four children of two Black parents Jessica (Brown) McDonald (c.1867-?) and Thomas George McDonald (c.1861-?; Fig. 3.2-fig. 3.3).[112] Of a middle-class family, her mother Jessica ran a general store and her father Thomas George was a porter on the Canadian Pacific Railway. In terms of economic status, African-Canadian historians Agnes Callest, Dorothy W. Williams, and Robin W. Winks observe there was an air of prestige attached to employment as a railway porter. The reason a majority of Blacks in Montreal and Halifax, if employed, were porters was because racially biased and exclusionary practices effectively barred better employment opportunities. There is evidence however that tips buttressed the salaries of porters. Thus, in spite of the physical demands and long hours and were paid less than White porters, Blacks who worked as porters were able to afford the possibility of a middle-class lifestyle although this remained considerably less affluent than its White class counterpart.[113] Importantly, Edith McDonald being born into a middle class Black family in large part enabled her to be able to paint.

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[111] Bristow, Peggy, ed. *We're rooted here and they can't pull us up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 13.

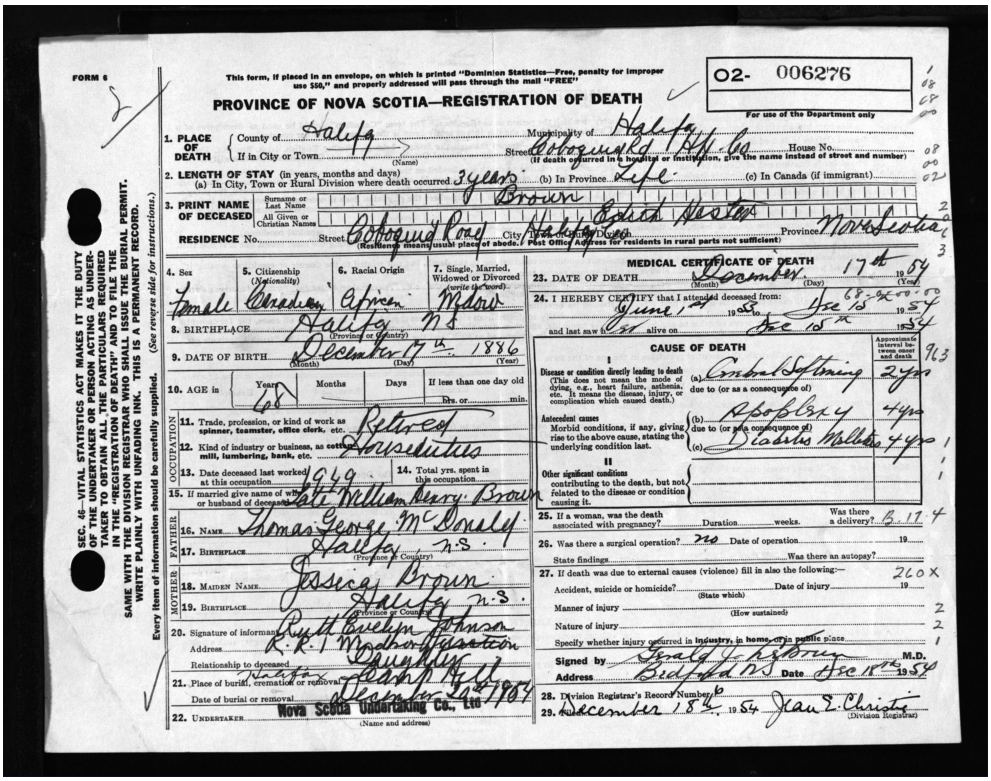
[112] See marriage certificate (fig. 3.3) of Jessica and Thomas McDonald. Observing that Edith was born the year they were married, that Edith produced her first painting at the age of twelve, suggests she was gifted from a young age as an artist.

[113] For a comprehensive view of Black Porters of Canada's Railways, see, Agnes Callest's essay, "Backs on Canadian Railways," 20, no, 2 *Canadian Ethnic Studies* (1998). 36-54. See also, Dorothy W. Williams, *The Blacks in Montréal, 1628-1986: Essay on Urban Demographics* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1998); Robin Winks, The Blacks in Canada: A History, Second Edition (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). 332-334.

Fig. 3.1. Photograph of Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (1886-1954), n.d.
Collection of Mrs. Geraldine Parker (Halifax, NS).
The inscription on the back of this photograph likely penned by
Edith McDonald reads, "To Nellie, With best wishes from her friend Edith."

Fig. 3.2. McDonald family photo, n.d, Black and white photograph mounted on card, 5" x 7" Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker. Pictured from left to right: Edith McDonald, Narborne McDonald (brother), Jessica McDonald (mother), Tom McDonald Jr. (brother), Thomas George McDonald (father), and Ida McDonald (sister).

While work continues in constructing a comprehensive picture of McDonald's life, interviews underway since summer 2012 with the artist's only surviving granddaughter, Mrs. Geraldine Parker, a long-standing resident of Halifax who had brief contacts living with McDonald in her youth, lend insights. McDonald's death certificate (fig. 3.4) supports her birthplace to be Halifax, the artist's granddaughter believes McDonald also spent time living in Montreal's Plateau district near Parc Lafontaine and Rachel. Mrs. Parker also believes Montreal is where McDonald received artistic training. An image and inscription further situate McDonald's roots in the razed African Nova Scotian community of Africville (fig. 3.5).



FORM 6

This form, if placed in an envelope, on which is printed "Dominion Statistics—Free, penalty for improper use $50," and properly addressed will pass through the mail "FREE"

02- 006276

For use of the Department only

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA—REGISTRATION OF DEATH

1. PLACE OF DEATH — County of Halifax; If in City or Town (Name); Municipality of Halifax; Street Cobequid Rd; (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give the name instead of street and number); House No. 60

2. LENGTH OF STAY (in years, months and days) (a) In City, Town or Rural Division where death occurred 3 years; (b) In Province Life; (c) In Canada (if immigrant)

3. PRINT NAME OF DECEASED — Surname or Last Name: Brown; All Given or Christian Names: Edith Hester

RESIDENCE No. 60 Cobequid Road; Street; City Halifax; County; Province Nova Scotia

(Residence means usual place of abode. Post Office Address for residents in rural parts not sufficient)

4. Sex	5. Citizenship (Nationality)	6. Racial Origin	7. Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced (write the word)
Female	Canadian	African	Widow

8. BIRTHPLACE Halifax (Province or Country) N.S.

9. DATE OF BIRTH December 17th 1886 (Month) (Day) (Year)

10. AGE in — Years 68; Months; Days; If less than one day old — hrs. or min.

OCCUPATION

11. Trade, profession, or kind of work as spinner, teamster, office clerk, etc. Retired

12. Kind of industry or business, as cotton mill, lumbering, bank, etc. Housewife

13. Date deceased last worked at this occupation 1949

14. Total yrs. spent in this occupation

15. If married give name of wife or husband of deceased late William Henry Brown

FATHER

16. NAME Thomas George McDonald

17. BIRTHPLACE Halifax (Province or Country) N.S.

MOTHER

18. MAIDEN NAME Jessie Brown

19. BIRTHPLACE Halifax (Province or Country) N.S.

20. Signature of informant Ruth Evelyn Johnson

Address R.R.1 Mcdonald's Corner

Relationship to deceased Daughter

21. Place of burial, cremation or removal Camp Hill Cemetery

Date of burial or removal Dec 20 1954

22. UNDERTAKER Nova Scotia Undertaking Co., Ltd (Name and address)

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

23. DATE OF DEATH December 17th 1954 (Month) (Day) (Year)

24. I HEREBY CERTIFY that I attended deceased from: June 1st 1954 to Dec 15th 1954 and last saw h[illegible] alive on Dec 15th 1954

CAUSE OF DEATH

		Approximate interval between onset and death
I Disease or condition directly leading to death (This does not mean the mode of dying, e.g., heart failure, asthenia, etc. It means the disease, injury, or complication which caused death.)	(a) Cerebral Softening due to (or as a consequence of)	2 yrs
Antecedent causes Morbid conditions, if any, giving rise to the above cause, stating the underlying condition last.	(b) Arteriosclerosis due to (or as a consequence of)	4 yrs
	(c) Diabetes Mellitus	4 yrs
II Other significant conditions contributing to the death, but not related to the disease or condition causing it.		

25. If a woman, was the death associated with pregnancy? Duration weeks. Was there a delivery? B. 17

26. Was there a surgical operation? No Date of operation 19

State findings Was there an autopsy?

27. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following:— Accident, suicide or homicide? Date of injury 19 (State which) (How sustained) 260 X

Manner of injury

Nature of injury

Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in a public place

Signed by Gerald E. Osborne M.D.

Address Bedford N.S. Date Dec 18 1954

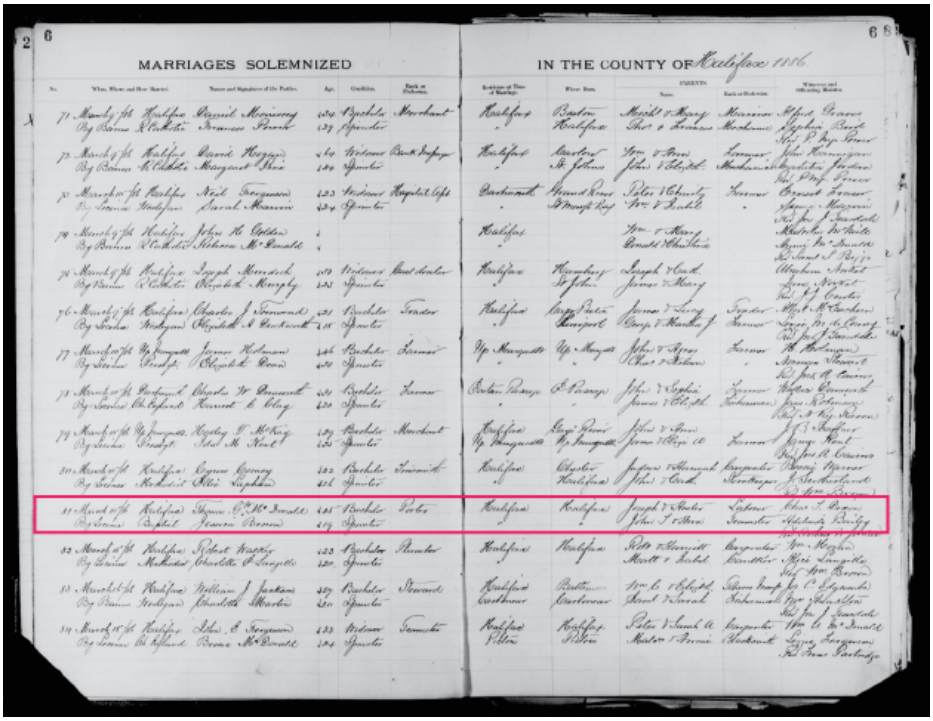
28. Division Registrar's Record Number 6

29. December 18 1954 Jean E. Christie (Division Registrar)

SEC. 46—VITAL STATISTICS ACT MAKES IT THE DUTY OF THE UNDERTAKER OR PERSON ACTING AS UNDERTAKER TO OBTAIN ALL THE PARTICULARS REQUIRED IN THE "REGISTRATION OF DEATH" AND TO FILE THE SAME WITH THE DISTRICT REGISTRAR WHO SHALL ISSUE THE BURIAL PERMIT. WRITE PLAINLY WITH UNFADING INK. THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD.

Every item of information should be carefully supplied. (See reverse side for instructions.)

Fig. 3.3. Death certificate of Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (1954). Nova Scotia Archives, Historical Vital Statistics; Halifax, NS)



MARRIAGES SOLEMNIZED IN THE COUNTY OF Halifax 1886

Fig. 3.4. Marriage certificate of Thomas G. McDonald and Jessica (Jessie) Brown (1886; Line #81, outlined). Nova Scotia Archives, Historical Vital Statistics; Halifax, NS)

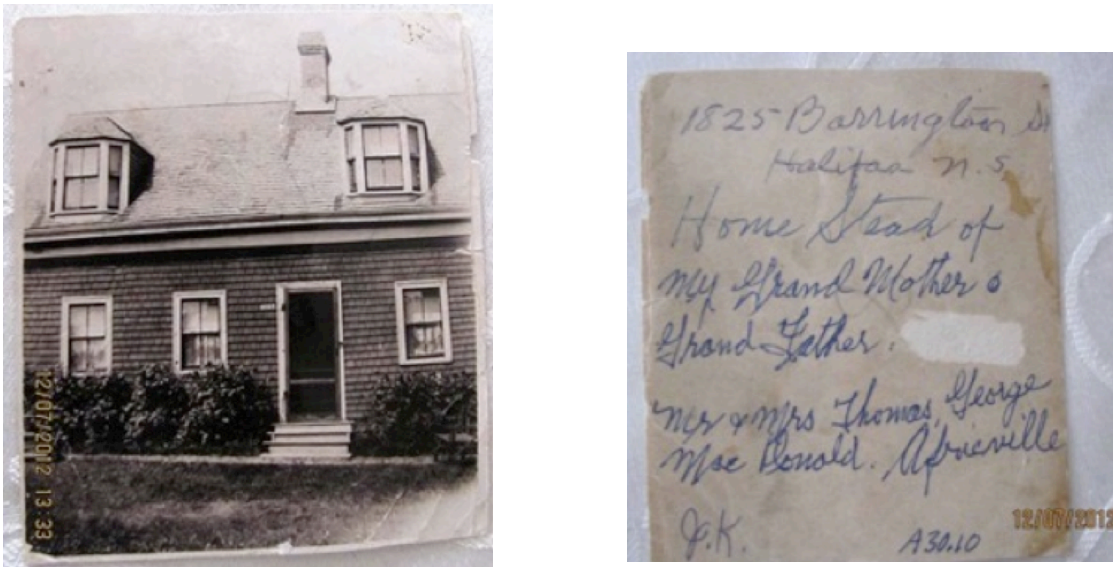


Fig. 3. 5. McDonald Family Home (recto-verso; n.d) Black and white photograph mounted on card, 12.7 cm x 17.78 cm, Collection: Geraldine Parker.

An especially noteworthy aspect of the photograph is the suggestion that this albeit impoverished Black community was not always a dump' or a 'slum' as the city implied in its justification for plans to demolish Africville under the guise of urban renewal in the 1950s. Rather, the photograph stands in refreshing contrast to the circulation of exterior images of an increasingly derelict Africville, taken between 1940 and 1965 (Fig. 3.6) – images that collude in cultivating negative stereotypes of that community, African Nova Scotians, and African Canadians at large, rather than contributing to understanding the systemic pressures that led to the decline.

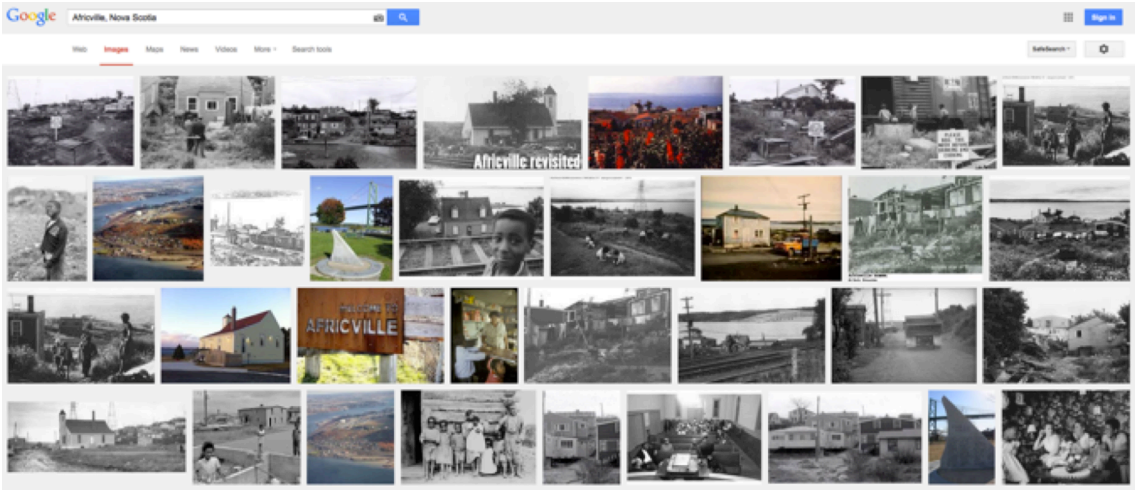


Fig. 3. 6. Result page of Google Images Search "Africville, Nova Scotia" (May 3, 2015)

Known as Africville from 1850, the vibrant all-Black community was home to approximately 400 residents – including Edith McDonald and her husband William Brown – was initially named the Campbell Road Settlement.[114] Settled between 1835 and 1840 by Black Refugees of the War of 1812, McDonald is a descendent of William Brown, who was one of the original eight families of Africville (fig. 3.7).[115] Advantages to living in Africville included opportunities for "port-related employment and non-commercial fishing."[116] Although residents held deeds and paid taxes to the

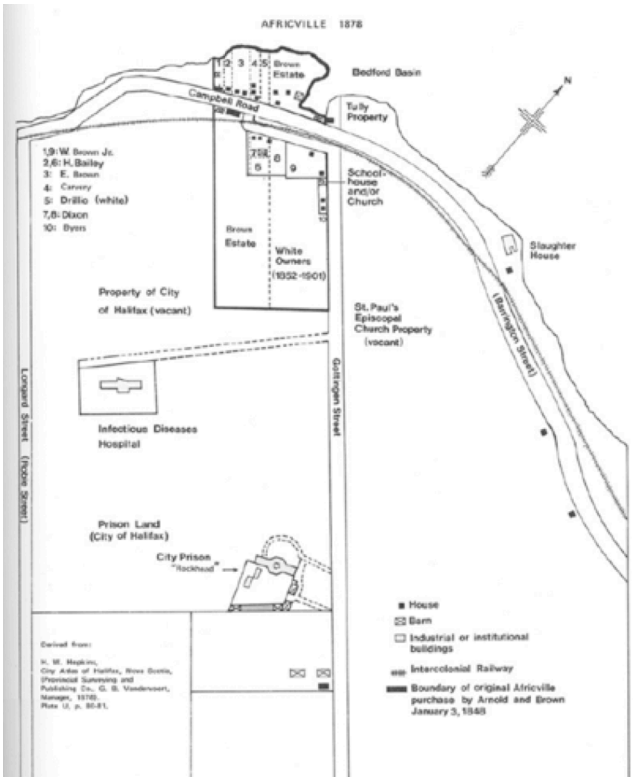


Fig. 3. 7Map of Africville 1878, derived from W. H. Hopkins,
City Atlas of Halifax, NS.
(Provincial Surveying v Publishing Co.,
G. B. Vandervoert, Manager, 1878).
Plate U, p. 80-81.

Source: Africville Relocation Report
Clairmont, Donald H.; Magill, Dennis W. (Dalhousie University. Institute of Public Affairs, 1971)

[114] Donald Clairmont, "Africville An Historical Overview," in *The Spirit of Africville* 2nd ed. (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Co. Ltd., 2010), 35; Donald H. Clairmont, Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* Third Edition (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1999), 30-31. The eight founding families recorded as having deeds in Africville are: William Brown, William Arnold, Carvery, Dixon, Hill, Fletcher, Bailey and Grant. See Fig.3.5 for land distribution between these families.
[115] Donald H. Clairmont, Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* 3rd Edition (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1999), 30-31;
[116] Africville: The Spirit Lives On, "Roots of Alienation," accessed December 20, 2014, http://www.africville.ca/resettlement/1800.html

City of Halifax from as early as the 1850s, the people of Africville "received no services and were forced to make do with whatever was available,"[117] namely, the adjacent, strategically situated, city dump.

Deprived of water and sewage, and given its growing reputation as a "slum," Africville became known as 'the town that begins where paved roads end.'[118] Further to the indignities and disrespect – including the City of Halifax's refusal to reinvest the taxes paid by Africville residents – between 1964 and 1967 the residents were inhumanely expelled from their homes and their community razed to the ground for the City's 'infrastructure and beautification' plans. The razing of Africville, which began with the destruction (like in the Shelburne race riots) of the community church, the Seaview African United Baptist Church, remains an open wound and a devastating testament to systemic and institutionalized racism in Canada's history with non-White peoples.[119] Currently, on the site of the original church, a newly built, though significantly smaller replica, serves as a museum commemorating the Africville experience.[120] Beside the reconstructed church-museum, where children once played and family homes once stood, is now a fenced-in dog park (fig. 3.8)

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[117] The Dominion, "UN Recommends Reparations for Africville Residents," posted March 14, 2004, accessed December 22, 2014, http://www.dominionpaper.ca/canadian_news/2004/03/16/un_recomme.html.

[118] "Remember Africville," directed by Shelagh Mackenzie (1991; Halifax, NS: National Film Board of Canada), 35mins.; CBC Digital Archives, "Africville: 20 Years Later" accessed December 22, 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/racism/africville-expropriating-black-nova-scotians/20-years-later.html.

[119] The crime against humanity that is Africville is a story so complex, it merits far more attention than can be afforded here. It is, however, critical to stress the human casualties inflicted by the razing of this community, having endured eviction pressure measures for move by the installation of a city dump, an infectious diseases hospital and a prison in the environs of Africville. In executing the city plans, homes and belongings were destroyed in an instant with little or no notice. People who were once homeowners became displaced throughout Halifax, forced to then rent apartments of lesser quality at high rates. As Africville industries were bulldozed, residents were left unemployed. A community that once prided itself as self-reliant and united without fear of discrimination, was now almost entirely dependent on welfare. Worse, unprecedented incidents of suicide, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, heightened among former Africville residents. For more see: *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community, Third Edition* (1999); CBC Digital Archives, *Expropriating Black Nova Scotians*, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/racism/africville-expropriating-black-nova-scotians/topic---africville-expropriating-black-nova-scotians.html, *Images of our Past: Historic Black Nova Scotia* (2006), *The Blacks in Canada: A History, Second Edition* (1997).

[120] Of note, the museum features art works produced by Edith McDonald's daughter, Ruth Johnson.

Fig. 3.8 Partial view of the Seaview Dog Park, formerly the community of Africville (2012). Image: Adrienne Johnson

The research for this thesis suggests that McDonald's four known, existing, landscape paintings dating from 1898 to 1906 are the earliest examples of work on canvas by an African Canadian woman artist.[121] Executed in oil, with highly finished, near invisible brushstrokes, each painting is in its original frame. A common element is Edith McDonald's signature, which consistently appears on the lower left or right of the canvas.

[121] I have as yet to discover a canvas work by a Black Canadian female dated earlier than the painting by Edith McDonald. Not only are the availability of sources limited; it was easier finding male Black Canadian painters (i.e. Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828-1901; St Andrew's, NB), Robert Scott Duncanson (b.1821-1872), born in New York, but grew up in Canada, leaving at 22 to Cincinnati).

The first and earliest work in the collection is the still life *Untitled* (1898; Fig. 3.9), a 31.75 cm x 39.37 cm still-life featuring red and yellow long stemmed flowers, that sprawl from a short blue vase, set on a wooden table, located in a non-descript room. Second is *Untitled* (1899; Fig. 3.10), a 31.75 cm x 52.07 cm wistful landscape of a wintery scene at dusk. In the foreground, a stream leads the eye to a small bridge that connects the two snow-capped riverbanks. Delicate traces of snow dot the few surrounding trees and a log cabin can be seen in the distance.

Fig. 3.9. *Untitled* (1898), Edith McDonald, oil on canvas, 31.75 cm x 39.37 cm
Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker

Fig. 3.10. *Untitled* (1899), Edith McDonald, oil on canvas, 31.75 cm x 52.07 cm
Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker. Photo: Joey Yazer (Halifax, NS)

Continuing the landscape theme is the third painting, *Untitled* (1901; Fig. 3.11), a romantic depiction of a virile spring landscape, measuring 49.53 cm x 74.93 cm. Reading the work diagonally from the top left, dramatic sun-kissed mountains and fluffy, luminous clouds, give way to vibrant

forest vegetation on rolling hills, towards an idyllically pristine river, where a trio of deer wander along the river bank.

Fig. 3.11. *Untitled* (1901), Edith McDonald, oil on canvas, 49.33 cm x 74.93 cm
Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker. Photo: Joey Yazer (Halifax, NS)

The fourth painting, *Untitled* (1906; Fig. 3.12), measures 49.33 cm x 74.93 cm, and depicts an equally majestic nature scene. Here, a herd of grazing and playing Highland cattle[122] dominate the foreground, and are framed in a sea of green grasses, impenetrable mountains and nostalgic Mauve-tinged skies. One wonders what inspired McDonald create these works, and the meaning she found in the subject matter.

[122] The appearance of Highland cattle is an interesting detail, as they are not indigenous to North America.

Fig. 3.12. *Untitled* (1906), Edith McDonald, oil on canvas, 49.33 cm x 74.93 cm. Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker. Photo: Joey Yazer (Halifax, NS)

A fifth known painting is unfortunately missing. This oil on canvas still life, *Sweet Peas* (1911, Fig. 3.13), measures 31.75 x 38.1 cm, depicts a vase of sweet peas, blossoming with pink and peach coloured petals. Until February 2013, *Sweet Peas*, was the only work by Edith McDonald to have been exhibited or photographed.[123] Viewing particularly her works between 1898 and 1906, the evolution in both her rendering of light, and compositional complexity, are striking.

Fig. 3.13. *Untitled* (1911), Edith McDonald,
oil on canvas, 31.75 cm x 38.1 cm
Collection: Mrs. Geraldine Parker

[123] As Montreal, Quebec and Halifax, Nova Scotia are historically among the earliest and most significant sites of Black settlement in Canada, research focused on Black art production in those areas. Eventually, my discovery of the existence of Edith McDonald and her work was through a now defunct website. (http://www.banns.ca/bspacegallery/in_this_place/slide_show_DOWN.swf - dead link) for the online exhibition, *In This Place: Black Art of Nova Scotia* (1997). Curated by Harold Pearse and David Woods, the exhibition contained 50 pieces including painting, sculpture, ceramics, quilting, and basket weaving, the earliest of which is dated 1885. *Sweet Peas* by Edith McDonald was the only painting of her collection exhibited, until February 2013.

Female Subjectivity and Respectability in Black and White

Canada's participation in African bondage inured an extremely limited and bigoted construction of African heritage within the nation. Black women and men were above all valued for their ability to labour during Canada's French and British colonial eras of slavery. This was a sentiment that continued into the twentieth century through systemic race-based exclusionary education, employment and land ownership structures. Gender specific psychic and material impact of anti-Black racism carried by Black women and men of the African diaspora resulted from White European and reductive constructions of blackness/Black people. In *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (2013), Maureen G. Elgersman contends that blackness became a "badge of slavery", an attitude and social construct that "relegated Blacks to inferior status," and continued post-slavery in "inform[ing] the proper place of [Black and] people of color as domestics, railway porters and custodians."[124] Elgersman further points out that as "a racially constructed labour system…[Black women] were profoundly affected by their day-to-day experiences."[125]

Focusing on the Black and White social dynamic during McDonald's lifetime, an aspect impacting Black women's day-to-day experiences as part of slavery's legacy during the artist's lifetime, was the concept of "respectability." Initially a misogynist, White, elite cultural construction that dictated and defined femininity and women's roles in private and public life, it eventually was a notion that was fostered by middle class and elite blacks. This held sway in Canadian society among the middle and upper-classes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Respectability was strategically tied to a women's sexuality and her morality and would, in tandem with the White colonial mindset toward categorization and hierarchization, play an essential social role in the distinction between "good" and "bad" women.

Black women, positioned for centuries as objects of labour and sources for White male sexual pleasure, were psychically and physically situated outside Canada's hegemonic, Eurocentric and misogynistic constructions of respectability, femininity and womanhood. Whiteness and White women were codified and normalized as the ideal. Writing about the objectification of Black female bodies, Charmaine A. Nelson, succinctly observes, "once Black women were seen as 'breeders' they were economically positioned as possessing, in the biological sense, the potential for an extremely

[124] Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York, NY: Garland/Taylor and Francis, 2013), 4.
[125] Ibid., 69.

lucrative pay-off for their owners." Nelson continues, "rape was systematically used against Black women within slave societies as a *sex-specific form of punishment* that benefitted White slave owners through a violent sexual fantasy and reproduction of new slaves [italics mine]."[126] The development of Black female identity was systematically stripped away through the inextricable linkage between production labour and female reproduction. Lorena Walsh and Lori Carr note that female slaves were also herded into domains of the most menial and or semi-skilled types of labour, generally occupied by lower-class White women. Female slaves, "grubbed swamps and meadows, weeded corn and vegetables…cleaned stables, heaped the dung, spread manure, [threshed grains], and were responsible for their own home duties."[127]

Once slavery was abolished, the notion of respectability emerged fiercely among middle and upper class Blacks in America and Canada during the mid-nineteenth century. At the time, many African Americans, understandably, thought the abolition of slavery would allow them to participate in American society as citizens and forge improved opportunities for themselves. Blacks, especially "middle-class Blacks and members of the elite"[128] saw the adoption of White delineations of respectability as the path toward uplifting the race, and gaining acceptance among Whites.[129] As such, ironically, middle and upper-class Blacks, guided by a mission to represent the race, promoted practices such as gainful employment, hard work, practicing Christianity, abstaining from drink and conspicuous demonstrations of wealth, and even the maintenance of a kept appearance was expected.

Accomplished Women?

White elite women were able to craft a measure of subjectivity through the arts of accomplishment (or female accomplishments), a social performance of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where White women were educated in embroidery, domestic decoration, learning classic languages such as French, Greek and Latin, playing an instrument such as the harp or piano, as well as drawing

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126 Charmaine A. Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York, NY :Routledge, 2010), 20-23.
127 Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Economic Diversification and Labor Organization in the Chesapeake, 1620-1820" in *Work and Labor in Early America* ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 179.
128 Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (North Carolina, NC: UNC Press Books, 2001), 3.
129 Jane E. Dabel, *A Respectable Woman: The Public Roles of African American Women in 19th-Century New York* (New York, NY: New York University, 2008), 1-9.

and painting in watercolour.[130] Little more than a shrewd masquerade to demonstrate the wealth and status of the woman's father, her "accomplishments" were ultimately geared towards securing the best possible suitor. This performance exemplifies the patriarchal commodification of the White female under the guise of morality.

Arguably, African women predominantly demonstrated their accomplishments through the sustenance of their respective communities as educators, health care workers, pastors, social workers and as community activists. Charting the lives of the lives of pioneering African Nova Scotian women from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries such as Rose Fortune (1774-1864,) a descendent of the Black Loyalists distinguished by her entrepreneurship in establishing a baggage service for travellers,"[131] Hamilton writes that African Canadian women survived the slings of slavery, servitude and racial discrimination with tenacity and dignity.[132] It should not be assumed however that African Canadian women's efforts were interpreted by White Canadians as being equivalent to that of White women.[133]

In art, Nelson's groundbreaking 1998 exhibition, *Through An-Other's Eyes: White Canadian Artists, Black Female Subjects*,[134] and its accompanying catalogue debunks the omission and evasion of Black subjects in Canadian art by unearthing thirty-five paintings of Black subject matter produced between 1786 and 1983 by Canada's most celebrated artists including Francois Malépart Beaucourt, James Wilson Morrice, Prudence Heward, Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Edwin Holgate and John Lyman. This important exhibition addressed the racially-informed biases in their representations of Black female subjects in contrast to White female sitters, underscoring the precarious power dynamic these White artists had over their Black sitters. Nelson's important art historical text, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (2010) further critically foregrounds and challenges art historical discourses and readings of Black women represented by White Canadian and European artists from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Among the most revealing aspects of her discussions is her analysis of the different readings generated between representations of nude Black and White

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130 Ann Bermingham *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2000), 185-189.

131 Sylvia Hamilton, "Naming Names, Naming Ourselves: A survey of Early Black Women in Nova Scotia" in *We're rooted here and they can't pull us up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 13.

132 Ibid.

133 Jane E. Dabel, *A Respectable Woman: The Public Roles of African American Women in 19th-Century New York* (New York, NY: New York University, 2008), 1-9. Dabel opens her discussion by referencing an interaction between 78 year old, Phoebe Sisco and army pension officer, J. McDonald, wherein, after she recounting the hardships she faced and charity she depended on to make ends meet since her husband's death, the officer described her as "very honest and respectable."

134 First presented at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Oshawa, ON) from 11 February-11 April 1999.

women. Nelson maintains White female subjects captured naked in classical art have been trained to be viewed as nudes, connoting an artistic depiction the White female form in varied states of undress. In contrast, Black female subjects painted in various states of overt undress leans to the voyeuristic and are intended to be interpreted as being naked and available sexual objects. Significantly, there is a subtle yet sharp difference in the representation styles of White and Black women in that the former designation as "nude" allows the White subject to retain her sexual virtue and female integrity while Black women continue to be portrayed as exotic, sexual objects.[135]

Nelson's *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth Century America* (2007) examines African American female artistic agency during the nineteenth century through the work of Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907), an American, lesbian sculptor of African and Native ancestry, is also instructive for my thesis about two Black artists in Nova Scotia because they were also considered to lack artistic ability by racist discourses in Canada. Nelson acutely highlights that Lewis' African heritage was a constant locus of negative criticism and scrutiny in relation to her abilities as an artist and her character, through correspondence by Lewis' cohort of female students with whom she was studying in Rome, and her circle of patrons, which included abolitionists.

McDonald's work is an exemplary testimony of African Canadian women and the legacy of African Canadian female artists' creative contributions, aspirations, agency, and intellectual authorship. In defiance to the social conscriptions of the period, and no less in a province with a distinctly charged and racially segregated culture, McDonald's paintings do not only exemplify how she saw the landscapes she portrayed, but also illustrate how she saw herself in-and-navigated Canada's landscapes – psychically and physically. In 1914 McDonald married William Henry Brown (1861-1943). The display at the Africville Museum, of three linoleum cut landscape prints[136] (fig. 3.14) made by their daughter, Dr. Ruth Evelyn (Brown) Johnson (c.1920-2003), speak to this artistic legacy. A passionate community activist, teacher, advocate, and artist, Brown-Johnson received an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Humane Letters in 1991 from Mount Saint Vincent University.

[135] Ibid., 1-19; 76-88.

[136] Notably, the far left image represents Africville's Seaview Church, the far right represents the Halifax Citadel. In 1796 rebel Black slaves from Jamaica known as Maroons were employed in the construction of the Citadel. Accessed June, 2015, (http://www.parl.ns.ca/nativeborn/loyalists.htm),

Fig. 3.14. Pictured from left to right: *Church Scene, Africville* (1949), *Dorey by the Shore* (1949), and *Tobogganing Down Citadel Hill* (1949), Dr. Ruth Brown Johnson, linoleum cut on paper, 10.2 cm x 12.0 cm. Collection: Africville Museum.

CONCLUSION

It is fitting that the land or aspects of it are regular features in official national iconography. Examples include: Canada's national motto, *Ad Mari Usque Ad Mare* (From Sea to Sea); its national flag; and Canadian currency which all continue to contain an image of aspects of Canada's natural landscape. These elements of Canada's landscape are typically employed to be read in a way that conveys the nation's ideologies as a prosperous and egalitarian place for everyone. The absence or scarcity of representations of African Canadians as image makers in histories of art at the turn of the twentieth century, puts into question the perceived value of members of this ethnocultural group as full citizens of the country. British North American (Canadian) colonial production was dependent upon the disenfranchisement and cultural genocide of Blacks. A significant feature of anti-Black racism is its cruel mechanisms of dispossession. Since the earliest beginnings of African slavery, dispossessing people of African heritage of every aspect of their identities and histories was paramount to the European colonial project. In his book, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (2002), Joseph Mensah provides an analysis of Canadian industrial connections to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which demonstrates Canada as a colony and then nation state profited from mercantile slave trafficking occurring between it and the United States, Europe and the Caribbean. As Mensah notes, "the colonial system created a heartland-hinterland relationship between the metropolis and colonies. Europe functioned as the core of control and change, while the colonies remained dependent with limited social, economic, and political clout."[137] Mensah concludes that an "asymmetrical relationship manifested in patterns of investment, trade, migration, and exploitation."[138]

I have argued that the contours of European colonialism and the significance of landscape both lived and imagined, coupled with White supremacist ideologies, had a direct impact on the full participation of African Nova Scotians in Nova Scotian society. Negrophobia permeated Nova Scotian society, and the alleged inferiority of African people was constantly reinforced. Eight years before slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire, a Black woman was publicly whipped in Shelburne, NS.[139] School texts from the 1840s characterized Blacks as "a burden; bad subjects; a

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[137] Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002), 37.
[138] Ibid. Of note, "Items such as flour, timber, and fish were shipped from Canada to maintain the plantations of the Caribbean; in turn the Caribbean islands supplied Canada with sugar, rum, molasses, and Black slaves."
[139] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* 2nd edition (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 127; 363.

tax on charity; anything but the pride of Nova Scotia" and "neither prosperous nor purposeful."[140] Official school texts all but omitted the presence of Blacks after 1865, and they were equally devoid of even the slightest reference to slavery in Canada.[141] African Nova Scotian communities were overwhelmingly segregated from Whites. In fact, Nova Scotia closed its last segregated school only in 1983.[142] In contrast to poor Whites, Blacks were consistently barred from all but menial and semi-skilled labour, paid less, and worked longer hours with no security. Even during positive economic periods, the systemic and institutionalized anti-Black hiring practices remained in place. Further adding insult to injury, it was not uncommon for free Blacks bearing certificates of freedom to resort to slavery to survive. Fundamentally, however, as James W. St. G. Walker observes, the success African Nova Scotians gained and the resilience of that community was due to a "strong sense of group identity and mutual reliance, combined with the churches [a key source of community and religious strength in the histories of Black North Americans], produced an intimate community life and a refuge against white discrimination."[143]

In consideration of the teaching and display of Canadian art from around the twentieth century, W. E. B. DuBois asserts in his influential 1901 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois', that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line."[144] As an issue that continues, a question is: if art is a distinct method by which intercultural interaction, discussion and understanding is facilitated, what does the continued underrepresentation of early African Canadians as fine artists reveal in relation to the nation's progress in challenging the problematic issue of the "color-line"? Canadian landscape as site and artistic genre art is implicit in the matrix of belonging, agency and historical memory. For instance, in Mackey's discussion on the intersectionality of race, nature and gender across the nationalist ideals of the Canada First Movement, observes the following of the group, which supports how African Canadians were imagined as other:

> It was believed that, unlike the United States, Canada's northern climate would keep it "uncontaminated" by weaker southern races. Parker suggested that the northern climate was "a fundamental political and social advantage," because a "persistent

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[140] Ibid.
[141] In the 2012 official Social Studies Quebec history text, *Panoramas,* Black history is represented as a footnote in connection with the murder of Marie-Josèphe Angélique in 1734.
[142] "End of Segregation in Canada" *Historica Canada: Black History Canada*, accessed February 26, 2015, http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/events.php?themeid=21&id=9.
[143] "Black Canadians" *The Canadian Encyclopedia,* James W. St. G. Walker, published February 19, 2013, last accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/m/article/black-canadians/
[144] W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago, IL.: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903), 5.

> process of natural selection" based on climate would ensure that it would avoid the "Negro problem" that was a "troublesome nightmare" in the United States.[145]

The art of McCarthy and McDonald are poignant testaments of African Canadian life and art production, and their work and stories corroborate a Canadian intellectual authorship and narrative long suppressed by omission. Overwhelmingly, our exposure to art and culture of people of African descent in Canada is limited to the blockbuster museum exhibitions of ancient Egypt and the Sub-Saharan or during Black History Month programming. This temporal and geographic specificity reinforces Africa and people of African descent as "past," "afar" and "other."

In their edited 2007 text *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, which focuses on black positionality and the intersectionality of race, place and belonging, Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, suggest that recognising "Black geographies" – sites and events of oppression – "provide a way in which we can start thinking about how the lives of subaltern subjects are shaped by, and are shaping, the imaginative three-dimensional, social, and political contours of human geographies."[146] Keeping the artistic and cultural geographies of African Canadians alive is a network of community-driven African Canadian museums including: The Black Loyalist Heritage Centre, Birchtown; the Africville Museum (on the site of the community's razed church), Halifax; the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, Cherrybrook; and in Ontario including, the Buxton National Historic Site & Museum, Chatham-Kent; and the North American Black Historical Museum, Amherstburg. These sites present tremendous untapped opportunities for scholarly research, development and collaboration with both academia and national museum networks.

There is much to be gained in broadening and deepening the understanding of *our* multi-cultural history beyond the limited frame of Black History Month or the revelling in Canada's "brand" as a multicultural panacea. If we are to break the cycles of the past, it is imperative to include black positionality in the teaching and display of Canadian art history, and particularly from the turn of the twentieth century. It is from within this historical context that this thesis has presented an examination of the lives and work of African Canadian landscape artists George Henry McCarthy (1860-1906; Shelburne, NS) and Edith Hester McDonald-Brown (ca. 1880-1954;

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[145] Eva Mackey, "Death by Landscape: Race, Nature and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology," Canadian Women's Studies 20 no. 2, 126.

[146] Katherine, McKittrick, Clyde Woods, "No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean." in *Black geographies and the Politics of Place*, eds. (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 2007), 6-7.

Africville, Halifax, NS) as a means to present and document their artistic contributions to early Canadian art history.

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